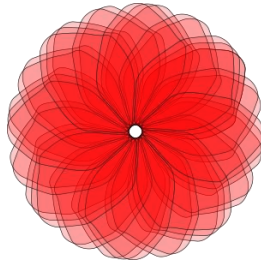


# A Genius Forged by Death

THE COLLECTED WORKS  
OF JOHN NOVAK



Lafoda Press  
Scranton / Utica / Nashua

Also by John Novak

The Hot Dog

Visit his Amazon store at

**<https://www.amazon.com/author/johnnovak>**

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# A Genius Forged by Death

Lafoda Press

*Words on every page*





# John Novak, 1969-2014



The only existing photograph of the author.  
Found among his possessions after his death.  
Date and location unknown.





## CHRONOLOGY

July 21, 1969 - John Novak, sometimes known as John Q. Novak, is born in Parts Unknown, Pennsylvania. According to family lore, he is immediately taken to the maternity ward so his parents and the hospital staff can watch Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon. For the rest of his life Novak will joke about his birth being upstaged by "a guy stepping off a ladder."

1987 - Moves to Pittsburgh to attend Andrews University.

1991 - Leaves Andrews 30 credits shy of a degree in Cultural and Literary Theory. Remaining in Pittsburgh, supports himself with odd jobs while working on an idea for a children's TV show.

April 5, 1992 - Puts the finishing touches on his TV project, which he calls "Benny the Blue Dinosaur."

April 6, 1992 - "Barney & Friends" makes its debut on PBS.

April 20, 1992 - Accepts a friend's offer to visit him in South-Central Los Angeles.

April 29, 1992 - Arrives at his friend's apartment just hours before the acquittals of four police officers in the Rodney King trial triggers massive rioting in the neighborhood.

May 1992 - After he gets out of the hospital, settles in the San Fernando Valley, finds a job, and begins writing screenplays.

May 1993 - According to urban legend, Novak and Julia Roberts are set up on a date by mutual friends, and it goes so poorly that Roberts marries Lyle Lovett just to take herself off the market. Novak later admits that he was the one who started the urban legend, after "somebody who looked like Lyle Lovett cut me off on the 405."

January 17, 1994 - Novak's unofficial bio claims that his apartment building was demolished in the Northridge earthquake. It has since been determined that Novak was homeless at the time, having just gotten out of jail for passing bad checks. For the rest of his time in Southern California, Novak lived in his agent's garage.

June 10, 1994 - Finishes his latest screenplay. It's a romantic comedy with an interracial element. Novak's agent gets the script to O.J. Simpson, who likes it enough to attach himself to the project.

June 17, 1994 - After watching the freeway chase in its entirety, tries to kill himself. Later he will claim he was "only partially successful."

August 1994 - Relocates to Northern California, where he hears tech jobs are plentiful. On the strength of his rudimentary programming skills, works steadily and eventually gets offers from Netscape, eBay and Yahoo! Turns them all down because the compensation is primarily stock options. Instead, moves to Seattle to take a job with Amazon, which offers him an extra \$1,000 in exchange for taking no equity.

1995 - 1999 - Works at Amazon long enough to see dozens of co-workers profit handsomely from their options. Bitter and frustrated, accepts an equity-rich offer from Enron and moves to Houston.

December 2001 - Loses his job when Enron files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

December 25, 2001 - Tries to kill himself again. Later comments, "Apparently that shit is harder to do than it looks."

January 2002 - Moves into his parents' basement.

February 2002 - Is asked by his parents to move out.

March 2002 - Returns to Pittsburgh and rededicates himself to writing. Supports himself via a series of office jobs.

December 2002 - Spends 30 days at a rehabilitative facility called Lollipop Sunshine Farms in Kanker's Ore, PA. The nature of his addiction is undisclosed.

January 10, 2003 - Marries Judy Soenso, whom he met in rehab.

November 2003 - Welcomes his first child, a daughter named Michaela.

May 2004 - Returns to Lollipop Sunshine Farms, without Judy. Stays two months before being asked to leave.

August 2004 - Is served with divorce papers by Judy. Contests the filing, which was made on the grounds of adultery, until Judy reveals she is the adulterer.

October 2004 - Finalizes the divorce on the day Judy goes into labor. Later agrees to a paternity test requested by Judy and her boyfriend, Truckstop Backhatter. Is confirmed as the father of Judy's son Dustin.

December 2006 - Marries Clytemnestra Shoreblatz.

April 2007 - Becomes a father again when daughter Electra is born.

June 2007 - Is served with divorce papers by Clytemnestra, who cites mental illness. Does not contest the filing.

July 2007 - Files for bankruptcy. Later that month, nearly dies of complications from a vasectomy.

October 2010 - Separates from his employer, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Refuses to comment on the matter as per terms of a settlement between himself and UPMC. Later hints that the story is fictionalized in *The Hot Dog*.

May 2014 - Publishes his first and only novel, *The Hot Dog*, to respectable sales and favorable reviews.

Summer 2014 - Maps out three more novels featuring the core characters from *The Hot Dog*. Also writes three screenplays comprising a science fiction saga known as *Spacebreaker*. Works tirelessly to publicize his novel, build his audience via personal appearances and social media, and market his scripts to Hollywood. Expresses frustration with the meager return on his investment.

October 2014 - Dies at age 45. The circumstances surrounding his death remain shrouded in mystery.

July 2016 - After prolonged legal wrangling involving Novak's landlady and his ex-wives, all of whom claim ownership of his unpublished work, it is announced that a compendium of the author's writings will be published by Lafoda Press in the fall.

It is hoped that *A Genius Forged by Death* will serve as both a parting gift to Novak's fans and a testament to the literary promise that was so tragically cut short.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executor's Note.....	ii
Foreword .....	iv
Introduction .....	vi
An Interview with John Novak.....	2
Novak's Blog.....	7
"Truer to You" (Commencement Speech).....	25
Sandwich Fixings: Three Sequels to <i>The Hot Dog</i> .....	27
<i>Spacebreaker</i> : The Collected Screenplays (Introduction) .....	41
A New Threat .....	43
Love in the Time of Activism.....	183
Feel the Power .....	325
Last Words .....	455





## EXECUTOR'S NOTE

Jack Dotum

John Novak's death came as a big surprise to many. Being chosen as executor of his literary estate was a big surprise to me.

I didn't know John well, but I spoke to him frequently in the course of my work at the Remora Literary Agency, which represented him. He was always very polite when we spoke. You'd be surprised how rare that is among authors. A certain best-selling writer, whom I will call "Royce Beryl Coates," used to bombard me all day with profanity-filled faxes. And she wasn't even a client.

John's agent at Remora was Alyx Smelkinson. Also known as my boss. No one was more familiar with John's work than Alyx. She was uniquely qualified to see to his estate. But Alyx is a very busy woman and she knew, without even checking her calendar, that she'd never have time for the project. That's where I came in.

Since John had no will, my duties quickly expanded to include everything he left behind, not just his writing. Luckily, for me, he lived simply. His worldly possessions fit into three large boxes. The furniture in his apartment belonged to the landlady. There was a bicycle, but it turned out to belong to a neighborhood kid.

Once those items were disposed of, all that was left was John's unfinished and unpublished work. And here, as you might guess, is where the real treasure of John Novak's estate was to be found. On the hard drive of his computer were the full text of his blog, a commencement speech, three complete screenplays, and outlines for several novels continuing the exploits of the characters from *The Hot Dog*. There was also a box of 5.25 inch floppy disks labeled "Magnum Opus," but I have yet to find a drive that can read the data on those disks. The last one I tried, which came from a site like eBay, ate the first disk and then caught on fire.

John was a true talent, in my opinion. The first seven paragraphs of *The Hot Dog* are some of the best writing I've ever seen. Based on my impressions, the material included in this volume lives up to those standards. It was only a matter of time, I believe, until John found a wide audience. Sadly, he won't be around to see that day.

My thanks to Herbert F. Jordache, Ph.D. and Clytemnestra Shoreblatz for their contributions, and to everyone at Lafoda for their support in compiling this book.

Finally, of course, my thanks to Alyx. If she hadn't believed in me I would have never gotten this assignment. And if that hadn't happened, I don't know what I would have done with myself all those evenings and weekends over the past six months.





## FOREWORD

Clytemnestra Shoreblatz

I've been asked to contribute a remembrance of my late ex-husband John. I have to admit, if you'd asked me this just a few years earlier, most of the words would have been unfit to print, ha ha. Not that there is much of anything truly "unfit to print" these days, when a baby's first word is just as likely to be "m-----f----r" as "mama." But you know what I mean. Well, you would know if you knew a little about my marriage to John. Since you probably don't, unless you're one of the many police officers who visited our home during those turbulent times, let me just say that it was no picnic. But we worked through a lot of things after our divorce, and by the time John died we had repaired most of the damage to the house. John's car was determined to be unsalvageable, but at least NPR took it off our hands.

Now that he's dead, I find myself remembering only the good things about John. For instance, only once did he ever have bad breath, and that was after he threw up on our honeymoon. I don't mean he threw up ON the actual honeymoon itself, because how would that work? Plus I was the one who was pregnant, not him. But we had a honeymoon ficus that had been a housewarming present from my first husband, and John threw up on it after my son, Hercules -- this would be the child I had with the ex -- accidentally punched John three times in the "privates." So how can you blame the guy for having a case of the old stenchmouth after something like that? He must have felt terrible about ruining Xin Lao's beautiful and thoughtful gift.

I'm sure there are other good things, too. They'll probably come back to me after I've submitted this to Mr. Dotum, when it's too late. Typical, right?

I was hoping John's and my daughter could help fill in the gaps, but she chose not to contribute anything to this remembrance. Electra says she's still in mourning, which I think shows great maturity for a 9-year-old.

According to Mr. Dotum, John's first wife, Judy, has also been invited to "say a few words," so to speak, ha ha. I bet she'll have plenty to "say." John always spoke so fondly of her when he was frustrated with me.

Anyway, what I hope you'll take from this is that John worked tremendously hard at becoming a published writer, and he seemed to be just on the cusp of beginning to feel as if he might have a chance to get an opportunity to break through when he died. And for that, I can only forgive him his failings as a husband and father and stepfather. Lord knows there were a few!

[Editor's note: Novak's first wife, Ms. Soenso, did not respond to repeated requests for a remembrance. Also, Ms. Shoreblatz contacted the publisher on the day the book was released to say that she'd thought of a few more nice things to say about her ex-husband but had either forgotten to write them down or had remembered they were actually about her current husband.]



## INTRODUCTION: A GENIUS FORGED BY DEATH

Herbert F. Jordache, Ph.D.

Before he was the up-and-coming author of *The Hot Dog*, John Novak was my fraternity brother at Eta Pi and, most of the time, a good friend.

We were both enrolled in the Cultural and Literary Theory program. Novak, as was his way, insisted on calling it the CLIT program. For him, no joke was too crude, no pun too awful, no bit of wordplay too stupid. How he didn't succeed in Hollywood is beyond me.

Every time John trotted out his CLIT joke, I challenged him on it. Even better, I used the very theory we were learning -- well, maybe I was the only one learning it -- to make my point. I argued that he, as a quote-unquote white quote-unquote male of Caucasian ancestry, was operating from safely behind an immensely tall and thick and almost certainly phallic barrier of privilege -- that not only did he not know how offensive his little joke was, he didn't know that he didn't know. He couldn't know it. And I pointed out that his ignorance was even more offensive than the joke itself.

To which Novak typically replied, "What?" I swear, if I hadn't known him so well I might have punched the guy right then and there. I could detect, in that single word, so many layers of sexism, racism, ageism, classism, ismism. I could see him erecting an engorged pink tower of indifference with which to oppress all those who refused to drop to their knees in servitude to the power structure, the dreaded canon of *Dead White Works by Dead White Males*. I could feel the bitterness oozing from his pores as the venomous word rolled from his persecutory lips.

Fortunately for John's face and our friendship, I could also pick up one other thing. Underneath the many layers of animosity, spite, sarcasm, entitlement and indifference with which he'd cloaked the word "What?", there was a candy-coated core of sweet, sticky irony waiting to be discovered and enjoyed by those perceptive enough to find it and intellectually dexterous enough to partake of its pleasures without sacrificing, or even compromising, their principles. In other words, by hardcore anti-elitists like me.

And what was the irony? Simply that Novak's repeated use of the crude acronym was done so in a post-post modern fashion. His aim was to comment on the fact that he was commenting on the fact that my reaction to the joke was both a comment on institutional sexism in language and a comment on the entire phenomenon of commentary. Not only was John critiquing the dominant paradigm, he was rejecting the validity of critiques as a culturally viable modality in the pre-post-feminist era.

It was brilliant. All I could do was laugh in a non-judgmental way.

All this is by way of explaining that whatever critical and popular reaction to Novak's novel may suggest, it is highly unlikely that more than two or three dozen people truly appreciate the depth and thematic complexity he has secreted in a rather mundane plot about bumbling thieves and a recalcitrant canine. I myself might not have recognized the blistering achievement that is *The Hot Dog* if John's untimely death hadn't disrupted all my preconceived notions of his life and work.

Take, for example, the protagonist, Yunko. A superficial examination of him reveals that he is short, fat, dour, gastrointestinally challenged, a bit on the clumsy side. If he only had children and a wife to disappoint, he'd be the ne plus ultra of that staple of 21st century scripted narratives, the dumbass dad/husband. Ah, but that's the point precisely! Yunko has no children. He has no wife. He has no family, no history before age 18 (and that only a single anecdote). He doesn't even have a real name. He exists entirely in the living now, the churning maelstrom of quotidian melancholy produced by rapid technological change, societal unrest, income inequality, widespread corruption and the illimitable distractions of electronica. Did his father fail to show him love? We don't know. Does he have unresolved feelings about his mother? We have no idea. Was he fucked by a priest? Fondled by an assistant football coach? Seduced by an older woman? Who's to say?

It is exactly this blankness that makes Yunko such a compelling character, as well as such a lucent deconstruction of the crypto-fascist "heroes" of so many contemporary quasi-narrative art forms. He is neither "bad" nor "good" nor "somewhere in between." Not only can Yunko not be labeled -- he can't be called unlabelable, either. He defies depiction. And yet somehow Novak manages the feat of depicting him. James Joyce, eat your Irish heart out. Billy Bob Faulkner, let a real pro show you how it's done. Hemingway, go fuck yourself. (Oh, wait -- you already did, in the mouth, with the barrel of a shotgun. Freud much, Papa?)

If I can accomplish one thing in this introduction, I hope it will be to spur serious readers to reconsider *The Hot Dog* in the light of the author's untimely death. For surely, now that John is gone, way too young and way too soon, we must anoint him with the honeyed oil of genius. We must look beyond his decades of struggle, his thorny, abrasive personality, his marital difficulties, his parental shortcomings, his lapses of hygiene. We must see through the ephemera of his truncated life and career -- see through to the landmark of American fiction that is John's first and only novel: a monumental achievement in any era, but especially so in the current one: a book for people who don't read. There can be no finer legacy for this great, great author.

It is my great honor to be able to present this compendium to established Novak fans as well as newcomers to the bandwagon. John will live on through his readership.

If I can accomplish only two things in this introduction, the second would be to remind the literati that my manuscript, *The Hot Dog: A Critical Appreciation*, is complete and ready for publication.





# An Interview with John Novak

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The following was originally scheduled to appear in the online journal *Books 'N'at*, whose focus was the Pittsburgh literary scene. The publication shut down shortly before the issue in question was to be posted. The owner of *Books 'N'at*, Trip Lambert, claimed his server was destroyed in a fire. An insurance investigation revealed that the server was cloud-based.

Shortly before the demise of his journal, Mr. Lambert accepted a freelance position with Buzzfeed.

---

**John Novak's novel *The Hot Dog* has been reviewed several times since its publication. It was also the subject of a controversy, when Novak made remarks in an interview. Recently, Books 'N'at spoke with the author about the novel and his creative process.**

**BOOKS 'N'AT: What was the first seed of *The Hot Dog* -- the first observation that later became a character, or the first note that later became a plot?**

JOHN NOVAK: I had a notion of Denise, of a character named Denise, who had dark, curly hair and fraught relations with her father, way back around 1992, but she was the last character to come properly into focus. I was still figuring out her basic story just a couple of months prior to publication. And then I realized her name was Dennis, and she was a he, and he was bald. After that, it was an easy decision to remove the character from the novel.

Around the same time that I "met" Denise-who-became-Dennis, I wrote a paragraph about a father who sets out to eat the family dog. This paragraph didn't make it into the book, but it led me to the real seed -- the dog, Guff, whose name is, of course, short for McGuffin. The oldest scene in the book is the one in which Yunko tries to walk the dog. Something about the collision of modality and modernity there, of man and mutt, guided me into the larger work.

**What was the first chapter that was written? Were there early drafts, or even entire chapters, that were tossed out?**



The first complete chapter was the cruise-ship chapter, which anchored the first draft. Originally I kept that chapter and threw out the rest of the draft. But later -- and unfortunately, after I'd thrown the remains of a spaghetti dinner into the same garbage can -- I decided to keep the draft and get rid of the chapter. I didn't see how a bunch of dog thieves from Pittsburgh could end up on a cruise ship. None of them had that kind of money to spend.

**What is your working day like? Do you sit at a desk? Do you walk around? Longhand? Computer? Dictaphone?**

Studies tell us that the only thing worse than sitting all day is standing all day, so mostly I try to work lying down. So I guess I'm like a prostitute in that I do most of my work on my back! Although actually I usually lie on my stomach, because it's wonderful for the digestion.

When revising I sit on a bar stool, at an old oaken desk I found in a dumpster outside the Sorbonne. Can you imagine? A free desk! All I had to do was pay to have it shipped back to the States.

I hand-write everything. Much as it might streamline my work process, I just haven't been able to embrace the use of word processing technology. I'm terrified that when I switch off the screen everything I just typed will be gone forever, like, poof.

The creative process is, I imagine, a lot like what every other fiction writer goes through. You have a plot twist or a scrap of dialogue or a sliver of narration in your head, you put it on paper, and then it's like -- holy crap! That's even better than it sounded in my brain! And once you're over that hurdle, the rest is pretty straightforward. I used to be thrilled to do 20 pages a day, but I've found that, at my age, 30 a day is a more realistic goal.

**O.K. On to the book. Some of the reviews have focused on subplots, and the way that you force your characters off of the main drag of the novel -- multiple dog heists -- into technological satire, social satire, satirical satire, etc. Talk a little about the pruning process: when life is so messy, and one event can, by an almost imperceptible causal chain, affect another event, where is it safe to draw the line between plot and subplot?**

Well, I didn't really think in terms of plot. Does this book even have a plot? Maybe one of your readers can point it out to me. I thought more in terms of the story-character nexus. With each of the major characters and each of the chapters, I was striving for the classical unities of place, time, and action. I was trying to find simple problems, simple situations -- man tries to take over his wife's newspaper business; fun-loving woman meets sugar-addict at airport coffee kiosk -- and then inhabit them as fully as possible. Pruning back or reining in are unpleasant tasks. I would much rather reign in my story -- as in, rule it! (Benevolently, of course; I'm no Neville Chamberlain.)

Once a story's constraints are established, though, you face the vastly more enjoyable task of layering as much of life into it as you possibly can. What's always struck me about Robert Frost's remark about free verse -- that it's like tennis without the net -- is that playing tennis without a net is against the rules. I mean, how can it be tennis without a net? What's next -- no ball, either? No paddle?

Does that answer your question?

**Each orbit of the book has minor characters who seem as though they might resurface but don't. Is that just one of the liabilities of writing a book? Or is it an intentional attempt at a certain realistic randomness?**

Wait -- which characters are we talking about? [The interviewer supplies examples.] Well, shit. I wish somebody had brought this up before I published the damn book. Hell. Now I feel like I'm going to have to issue a revised edition.

On second thought, nah. Too much trouble.

**Do you have a favorite of the main characters? Are there any who you feel didn't work out the way you would have liked?**

I love all five of the major characters more or less equally, but I'll admit to a particular affection for Yunko, because he's just such a pain in the ass. People never understand why I say that, but they're the same people who've been calling me a pain in the ass all these years. But they mean it lovingly, just like I do. At least I'm pretty sure that's how they mean it.

**Talk a little bit about the famous diagram that has never been mentioned anywhere else but in this interview -- the diagram that blueprints the novel. How big is it? Is it on normal paper? Will you be selling it online?**

Oh, that diagram. It's really more of a schematic. Or maybe a paradigm. Whatever you call it, it's just one of the things I do to avoid thinking, feeling, and writing. Thinking hurts my brain, feeling hurts my heart, and writing hurts my back -- that's what I get for lying on my stomach. So when I need relief from those activities, I'll sit in a really comfortable chair, pour myself a bottle of triple-malt Scotch, and come up with a famous diagram/schematic/paradigm thingy.

I believe the one you're referring to was written in marker on toilet paper. It's held up well, though.

***The Hot Dog* is one of the best examples I know of a story about the effect of drugs on the elderly. Did this come from your experience of having elderly parents?**

It's scary how you picked up on that. Good on you, mate.

**Some aging novelists, William Shatner in particular, seem to be doing their best work in their later years. Others, like James Patterson and Stephen King, have seen their output dwindle to only two or three books a year. What's your feeling about looking down the road at the next three or four decades and trying to keep doing what you have been doing?**

Well, I'm a late-blooming author, if you will, in that I published my first novel at age 44. So three or four decades from now I expect to have published another novel. Or at least to have finished an outline for one.

**You're trying to sell the movie rights to *The Hot Dog*. What can you tell us about that whole process?**

Well, observing those efforts from a distance, it's like the old saying, right? About sausage-making and the political process? Who was it, Karl Marx who said that? Or Karl Rove? George Karl? The important thing to keep in mind is that a hot dog is a kind of sausage. So, you know, there's a political allegory in there somewhere.

As for the movie version of the book, I'm excited by the prospect, excited that Benedict Cumberbatch is interested in playing Yunko and Martin Freeman is agreeable to voicing Guff. I hear rumors that Tom Blaney's character is being reimagined as a woman so Amy Schumer can play her. I've also heard Amy wants to play Tom as a man.



# Novak's Blog

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A life cut short, a blog cut short. Who's to say one of these is more tragic than the other? Novak's Blog contains some of the author's sharpest writing and pithiest insights. From his fresh answers to age-old questions in the "Ask Novak Anything" series, to his disarmingly candid accounts of being trolled and attempting to organize a book signing, to the heart-on-the-sleeve gutsiness of "One from the Heart," and finally to the poignant, Keillloresque "L. A. Ghost Story," the blog offers us a finely etched portrait of an artist nearing the peak of his expressive powers. Here we get all the humor and doubt and verve and élan of a man in the prime of his life -- just days before that life ended. Sad!

---

## 8/26/14 - Ask Novak Anything

### Question 1 -- Where do you get your ideas?

Great, great question. The big time authors all seem to hate this one. They joke about it, they dodge it, they stall. But not Novak! Watch me knock this puppy out of the park! Where do I get my ideas? I start writing. That's the only way to do it. I write whatever comes into my head. Pure, raw, unfiltered -- whatever's bubbling around in there gets regurgitated onto the page or screen. It may not be much, but it's an idea. And I've always found that one idea leads to another. For instance: The other day I sat down at my laptop and typed the first thing that came into my head, which was "I don't know what to write and I'm afraid I'll never have another idea." Only what came out was this:

U sib;r jbiq qgR RI QEURW bs U;n DEus U;kk bwcwe gCW birgwe usw,

Because I'd started with my fingers on the wrong keys! (Don't you hate when that happens?) But as I was sitting there laughing at myself I got another idea: What if Yunko's actually a robot vampire? Which is one of the worst ideas I've ever had, frankly, but by the time I figured that out I'd written 17 pages about it. So instead of sitting there being blocked I ended up having a very productive day. And who knows, maybe at some point in the future I'll realize that idea is actually so terrible it's brilliant -- 'cause that does happen, more often than you think. And then I'll wish I'd kept those 17 pages.

### Question 2 -- How has your life changed since *The Hot Dog's* publication?

Well you know the big challenge has been keeping things on an even keel. I'm kind of an excitable type, one of those guys who wears his emotions on his sleeve -- on his forearm, actually, since I don't usually wear sleeves. I guess it's just the way I was raised, but I'm not all that crazy about showing a lot of sleeveage. Unlike these kids today.

Anyway, so the tough part for a humble man such as myself has been not getting too ecstatic about the rampaging success of the book. I mean, I could have turned into a real jerk if I weren't so good at not doing that. I could have become one of those guys who carries copies of his book around everywhere he goes, with the back cover facing out so everyone can see the author photo; who uses his juice to get a better seat on the bus or to cut to the front of the line at Chipotle; who turns every conversation, no matter the topic, into an opportunity to talk about his well-reviewed and fast-selling novel; and so on and so forth. It makes me proud to realize I'm better than that. It also makes me determined to keep up the good work even as the book takes off. Now that I'm big time I have to be humbler than ever. Astonishingly humble, you know?

## 9/6/14 - You know you've made it when you get your first troll

So there I was, minding my own business, when I got an email from somebody called SwagGenius4:

WHAT IS YOUR PROBLEM, ANYWAY? I TRIED TO READ YOUR BOOK ONLINE AND THEY WOULDN'T LET ME. YOU SUCK, MAN.

[I should note before going on that what's transcribed above and below is an extremely sanitized (not to mention properly spelled and punctuated) version of the actual messages, which looked like the work of someone who was unbelievably foul-mouthed, barely literate, and an incompetent typist.]

I could have just ignored him, and maybe I should have. I had no idea who he was. I had no idea who "they" were either -- the "they" who wouldn't allow this fellow to read *The Hot Dog* online. Presumably "they" were one of the many fine online booksellers from whose virtual shelves my book has been flying off. "They" may have even been me, as in my eStore. (We never close!)

In any event, I didn't want to just blow the guy off. A stupid and unfriendly potential customer is still a potential customer, after all. I'm not one of these big shots who get all high and mighty about whose money they'll take and whose they won't.

So I wrote back to the guy, figuring I could defuse his rage with humor and diplomacy:

*Hello, SwagGenius4. Cool name. Do you know SwagGeniuses 1, 2 and 3?*

*Anyway, you seem pretty irritated. I'm not sure I understand what or who exactly you're complaining about. Can it be that you bought the Kindle version of my book but are now having some kind of technical difficulties? Please let me know. I'll help you if I can. Thanks for your interest in my work!*

Well that didn't do the trick. I can't even begin to transcribe his reply. If I cut out all the objectionable language there wouldn't be anything left. And even if I left all the bad language in, I'm not sure I could turn that mess into something coherent.

The only thing I got from the message was that SwagGenius4 must be male, based on all the references to his (as he put it) "PNUS."

At this point ignoring the guy was definitely the right course of action. But I couldn't help myself:

*The Kindle thing was the most charitable interpretation of your first message that I could come up with. The more likely interpretation, I'm starting to suspect, is that you found an excerpt of my book online and got mad when you realized you'd have to pay to read the whole thing. Well, sorry, but I'm not a charity. You want books for free, go to the library.*

SwagGenius4 didn't like that, let me tell you.

WHY IS THERE AN UGLY DOG WHERE YOUR PICTURE SHOULD BE? he wrote, referring to my Gmail profile picture at the time. ARE YOU EVEN UGLIER THAN THAT STUPID DOG?

*That's me before the facelift*, I wrote, thinking I might win him over with wit.

I BET YOU'RE SHORT, BALD, FAT AND HORRIBLY DEFORMED, he replied. WHY ELSE WOULD YOU HIDE BEHIND A PICTURE OF A DOG?

*5'8" isn't short*, I wrote back. I probably should have put a little more thought into that one.

HA HA, YOU'RE THE SEVENTH DWARF -- CRAPPY! he wrote back. I presume he meant eighth dwarf, but really, who knows?

YOU JUST GOT HARDCORE PWNED, SwagGenius4 added before I could reply. Apparently "pwned" is a thing.

*Whatever. I'm blocking you*, I wrote back.

OH BURN, he responded. Looking back on it I think that was sarcasm.

*So you'll have to annoy someone else*, I told him.

I've preserved the syntax of his next response just so you'll have an idea of what I was dealing with. It went:

HARD TO UNDERSTAND GAY AUTHORS WRITING A BOOK BECAUSE THEY THINK THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY.

I SHOULD SHOOT THEM ALL, THAT'D TEACH THEM, he added while I was still typing my reply.

I scrapped what I'd been about to say and instead wrote:

*Yay, another gun nut! Just what we need in Murca.*

[What I'd been writing was a funny, scathing, impassioned and, I don't mind telling you, AMAZING takedown of homophobia and homophobes. God, I wish I hadn't deleted it!]

WHA TTHE HELL MING U? Swag Genius 4 said.



I could tell I was starting to get to him. The question was whether to go in for the kill or instead show mercy. If I blasted him it would be game over, end of story, nothing learned. If I let him save face maybe he'd think twice next time before going off on someone. And afterward maybe he'd even thank me.

*What does that even mean YOU IDIOT*, I wrote. Not proud of myself for taking the low road, but there you have it. Mostly I wish I hadn't forgotten the question mark.

I give you his final message exactly as it appeared in my inbox:

HHHHHHAAAAAAAAAAAAA! DU LOOOOL! TWSS PNUS!

So I guess he realized he'd been beaten, and tried to cut his losses.

Adios, SwagGenius4. Next time you try trolling someone you might not want to take on a grown-ass writer-man. Just sayin'.

And in the meantime, if people are trolling me then that means they're paying attention. So I'm calling the whole thing a big win for Novak. Can't wait to check the traffic stats! And it won't surprise me at all if I get a sales bump out of this.

## 9/11/14 - L. A. Ghost Story

"Hello! And welcome to Moviefone, a service of the Los Angeles Times and KLOS."

It's been 20 years since I first heard those pre-recorded words spoken in that cheesy tone, that throaty voice. Twenty years.... The world was different then.

Men were men. You knew they were men because they had mustaches and goatees, and wore ripped jeans, flannel shirts and work boots.

MTV played music videos. (I know, right?)

There was, like, one browser. There were maybe 150, 200 websites, tops. 137 of them pornographic. (So not everything has changed.)

Apple was on its death bed. (Shouldn't that be "in its death bed"? Oh well.) Steve Jobs was just another jerk with too much money. Bill Gates ruled all. (Kids -- Google "Microsoft" for the deets.)

The U.S. President was a smart but ineffective Democrat who was constantly at odds with a bunch of Republican blowhards in the House. (Hey...)

It was a more innocent time. The cancer known as "Reality TV" had not yet metastasized. Nobody had ever heard of social media, apps, smart phones, texting.

When people wanted to listen to music they turned on the radio or played a CD. When they wanted to read a book or a magazine or a newspaper they...read a book or a magazine or a newspaper.

When you saw someone coming toward you on the sidewalk, having an animated conversation with himself, you presumed he was crazy and gave him extra space. Now you wonder what kind of Bluetooth he's using.

People watched movies on giant screens in dark auditoriums full of strangers. Now they look at 6-second videos on tiny screens while waiting to order at Chipotle.

You had to wait a week to see the next episode of a TV show. You had to wait all summer to see the next season.

Twenty years ago L.A. was my home. People called it the City of Angels. I called it the City of Angelyne. Her billboards were everywhere. Such a classy gal. Never did figure out what she was selling.

I hung my hat in a neighborhood that was equal parts Hispanic families and Caucasian twentysomethings like me. Naturally the place was called Koreatown. It was wretched and full of filth.

The hat, I mean. The neighborhood was lovely. It was vibrant. You never heard the same car alarm twice. When young men peed in other people's yards in broad daylight, they did it without shame. And boy were they hydrated. Urine as clear as a mountain spring.

I had a car then -- my first. They won't let you establish residency in L.A. if you don't own a vehicle. It's some kind of obscure bylaw.

The car was an '84 Cutlass Ciera I took to calling the Gray Ghost because of the way it shimmered in the morning smog. V6 under the hood, plush leather seats, hubcaps on almost every wheel.

I never drove it anywhere because I was broke and out of work, but I was always having to move the car to stay ahead of the street cleaners. That got old pretty quickly, so one day I parked the Ghost in the lot of my local Ralph's grocery store and just left it there. There were signs all over the place saying "Customer Parking Only," but I figured that if I popped into the store every day to buy a candy bar or a doughnut, then technically I'd be in compliance.

It worked for a couple of weeks and then the Ghost got towed. Which was probably just as well, because all that junk food was wreaking havoc on my libido. That and the fact that I didn't have a girlfriend.

It took me over an hour, by bus and then on foot, to get to the towing company's offices. I was told that to reclaim my car would cost \$600, which was almost as much as I'd paid for it. Nonetheless I was prepared to use up my last little bit of credit to liberate the Ghost. But for some reason the guy at the towing company would only take cash.

I took one last look at the Ghost as I left the office. It seemed a little forlorn nestled there between a green El Camino and a tie-dyed VW bus, but there was nothing else I could do.

I'd arrived at the towing company offices at 7 a.m. sharp, so by the time I got back to Koreatown it wasn't even nine. Walking past the Ralph's parking lot sent a pang of regret shooting through me. And then, just when I was starting to feel it had passed, I noticed a street cleaning sign: No parking from 12 AM - 11 PM, every other Tuesday of every other week of any month with an R or a U. That was when it really hit me that I'd never see my car again.

Disconsolate, I let myself into my apartment. My plan had been to spend the day working on my "Hungry Hungry Hippos" screenplay, but in light of recent events I just wasn't feeling it.

At some point I realized that if I didn't stop brooding, pretty soon the whole day would go to waste. I picked up the phone and dialed the number I knew by heart.

"Hello! And welcome to Moviefone..."

One of the beautiful things about Los Angeles was that even in the early morning you could find a movie playing somewhere. In this case it was *Clifford* at the Beverly Center. I felt better almost immediately. I'd always had a soft spot for the big red dog.

Well it was a different Clifford, as it turned out. It was the one where 44-year-old Martin Short plays a 10-year-old boy whose parents are 59-year-old Charles Grodin and 41-year-old Mary Steenburgen. But that was still okay. Sometimes you just have to take what you can get.

## 9/19/2014 - Ask Novak Anything #2

### What advice do you have for aspiring writers?

So many ways to approach this one, it's almost overwhelming. Do I focus on the pragmatic, such as what kind of shoes you should wear, or the speculative, such as whether it's worth anyone's time, in the age of Snapchat and Instagram and two dozen other post-literate apps I haven't even heard of yet but that are all the rage among the digirati, to pursue a writing career? Or do I tackle the subject from some other angle -- the moralistic, the fascistic, the mythopoetic, the phenobarbitolic? I could spend all day, I could generate a month's worth of postings, just pondering the approach to the answer without actually doing any answering. In other words, I could treat this like an essay test in high school or college.

But I'm not in school anymore, and you're not my teacher, Loyal Reader. So let me give it to you straight. I don't claim any expertise but I do have my share of experience to draw on, and what that experience has taught me is that it's best to not spend too much time thinking about what you're going to write. Or as I like to remind myself, "When you start thinking, your writing starts stinking."

This may sound a little blasphemous, but the best writing doesn't come from your brain. For that matter, it doesn't come from your heart or your gut either. Oh sure, lots of people like those other kinds of writing -- the intellectual stuff, the emotional stuff, the alimentary stuff -- but lots of people like Justin Bieber too. Does that make Justin Bieber's music the best kind of music there is? Maybe, but keep in mind that music and writing are totally different.

So where does the best writing come from?

The genitals? I guess that works for Dan Brown, but we can't all be Dan Brown. I certainly can't be Dan Brown -- all those push-ups and sit-ups would kill me. Plus, when Dan Brown looks at the Mona Lisa he sees cleverly concealed references to a two-thousand-year-old conspiracy that, if uncovered, could turn Western civilization on its head; I see a woman with bad teeth.

The ass? That's definitely where my writing comes from. I've been pulling stuff out of my ass my whole career. But that's not the answer I'm looking for. Remember, I said the best writing, not my writing.

The secret, all you aspiring writers, is that the best writing comes from behind the knee.

"Which knee?" you're probably wondering. "Or is it both?" you're probably asking as a follow-up.

Well, look, no offense, but I'm not gonna tell you everything.

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Below is the infamous "Fuckerberg post" (as it has come to be known). The hyperlink took you to Novak's newly created Facebook page, about which he was clearly ambivalent. Weighing against the obvious marketing benefits of social media, in the author's mind, was allowing his privacy to be monetized by the person he christened "Freckles McBillionaire."

The post was intended to be humorous, obviously, but I think there's an undercurrent of despair there. Note the relative brevity vis-à-vis Novak's other blog entries. And the use of the terse "Yep" where a more light-hearted "Yeah" or "Yes" could have been employed. No poet was ever more conscious of word choice than the surgically precise Novak.

Morbid though such speculation may be, I can only wonder if John's untimely death owes at least in part to the turmoil he felt about this decision.

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**9/21/14 - Yep, sold out**

Not the book, me.

## 9/26/14 - One from the heart

First off, no, this is not an essay about Francis Coppola's notorious, eponymous 1982 film, which bombed so badly that it bankrupted him. But you're right to think that I'm the kind of person who would write about Coppola's disaster -- and not to gloat or poke fun, either. I'm drawn to stories like that; I know a thing or two about failure myself.

In fact, the story behind *One From the Heart* and its impact on Coppola's career and life would probably make a great subject for a future post. You want to talk about a reversal of fortune -- Bože moj! Whatever potholes I've hit on the road of my career are nothing compared to the one that turned Hollywood's boldest gambler into a chastened, debt-burdened hired hand for 8 years. Who knows what trails Coppola might have blazed if *One From the Heart* had been a hit? Who can imagine what his next feat of movie-business derring-do might have been?

Anyhoo....

You may have noticed that *The Hot Dog* is dedicated to my family, "whose support and encouragement made this book happen." You may have also noticed, in my bio, that my personal life seems like a bit of a mess. So, you might reasonably ask, what gives? How does a guy like me, an admitted failure as a son and husband (twice, in the latter case) and a, shall we say, work in progress as a father, get "support and encouragement" from his family?

Was I being ironic? For once, no.

I'll tell you what I was doing. I was taking the high road.

(For a change, I grant you.)

I was trying to convey, however clumsily, that even though my parents haven't spoken to me since they asked me to move out of their basement 12 years ago, I still owe them a debt of gratitude. (And other debts as well, but let's stick to the positive for now.) I was trying to convey that whatever regrets I might have about the way my marriages ended, whatever bitterness I might feel toward Judy and Clytemnestra (and their attorneys, and that stupid judge, who's living proof that justice really is blind), I recognize that we're all better off now, having elected to go our separate ways. (I'd still like to revisit the alimony issue, though.)

I also recognize that each of my marriages had its share of nice moments, and I'm grateful for the memories of same. They can be a comfort to me when I'm feeling lonely, sitting here in my little third-floor apartment, better known as the converted attic of my landlady's house.

Last but of course not least, I was trying to convey in my dedication that I haven't given up on myself as a dad, even if the signals I'm getting from my kids suggest that they're ready to give up on me. Believe it or not, oh fruit of my loins, you inspire me and, like Powdermilk Biscuits, give me "the strength to get up and do what needs to be done."

What I need to do right now is address each of you in turn, so here we go.

Mc-K-La, I'll never get used to the new way you're spelling your name even if it is pronounced the same as "Michaela," but I love you just the same. And I'm very proud of all those soccer trophies your mother told me about the other day. Don't pay any attention to what the other kids are saying -- they're just jealous. It's not everyone who can have perfect attendance at practice, and you deserve the recognition. And if you keep up the good work, someday you'll get to play in a game.

Dustin, I know you're not actually a middle child since you're the younger of two, but you're my middle child and you probably feel overlooked at times. I hope to do better by you. I'm really sorry about getting your birthday wrong, but please keep in mind that I did get the month and year right. Also, please quit trolling me. After the first two weeks it stopped being funny.

Electra, honey, I know you're only 7 but I need you to understand something: Pretty much nothing your mother and her legal team have said about me is true. You ever feel like getting the facts, you know where to find me. But actually, email works best.

This next part is for all three kids: If any of you understands how to work Facebook, would you please let me know? I'm having some trouble.

And Mc-K-La, don't you dare say "What's Facebook?" You may be too young to have an account, but I've heard you and your friends talking about how Facebook is only for old people. Forty-five is not that old, sweetie, as I hope you'll discover one day. In case it isn't clear, I mean that in the best possible way.



### 10/1/14 - Ask Novak Anything #3

**Question 1 -- I've noticed you sometimes use the middle initial Q and sometimes don't. Why the inconsistency? And by the way, what does the Q stand for?**

Whoa, back off, dude. I feel like you're stalking me. I guess it's nice to know you're paying close attention, but that question gives me the creeps.

But do please keep reading my blog, and I hope you'll follow me on Facebook.

In fairness to me, I don't think I'm as inconsistent about Q-sage as you seem to be suggesting. In fairness to you, I recognize that the Q is glaringly absent from my book -- cover, title page, everywhere you see my name as a matter of fact -- as well as my home page and other high-visibility locations.

So what's the deal? Well, with the website it's just an oversight that I'll soon correct. But the book is a different story altogether. I actually had the Q's in all the appropriate places, but chose to remove them. Why? Because, Loyal Reader, all those extra letters aren't free. You'd be amazed, I bet, to hear what it would have cost me to print a big gold "Q." on the cover. And you know pays for that ink? Ultimately, me.

With the Q's in place, my production cost per book was significantly higher, which meant that my sale price had to be higher if I wanted to maintain my profit margin. Which, when you're up to your ass in alimony, is kind of important. On the other hand, it didn't seem fair to penalize my readers for the high cost of ink. So something had to give, and out went the Q's.

As for what the initial stands for...if I ever find out, you'll be the first to know.

No, really. This is my parents' idea of a joke. One that has gone on for decades.

On my birth certificate it simply says "Q." Up until February 2002, when Deb and Don stopped speaking to me, I asked them about that "Q." many, many times but was never able to get a straight answer. I was assured it definitely stands for something; it's not just ornamentation, as in "Jesus H. Christ."

At age 15 I was told the Q stood for Quisatz, as in "Quisatz Haderach" -- which meant nothing to me until, later that year, I read Dune. I think the 'rents were being ironic when they claimed to have middle-named me after a messianic figure from science fiction, but I guess I'll never know. In any event it's spelled "Kwisatz," which renders the whole thing moot.

Another time, while I was still in college, I was told the "Q." stands for Quentin, as in Compson, supposedly my parents' favorite character from Faulkner. "You mean the one who kills himself?" I asked, because that was as much as I knew about Mr. Compson, having gotten no further with *The Sound and the Fury* than skimming the Cliff's Notes. "The one who goes to Harvard," my dad replied.

Needless to say, I didn't go to Harvard.

**Question 2 -- I worked out that "Novak" is an anagram of "Vanko," which sort of sounds like "Yunko." Any comment?**

I'm not Yunko and Yunko's not me, all right? Yes, we're both 5'8" and a bit on the heavy side. And yes, we're both Slovak. And yes, of course, seeing as how he's the protagonist of a novel written by me, we have a few other things in common. I don't deny using myself and my circumstances as a starting point for the character. What author doesn't, really? You think Jo Rowling just made up all that stuff about Harry Potter? Take a good look at a picture of Jo and tell me you can't see the faintest traces of a lightning-bolt-shaped scar on her forehead. She does a good job covering it with makeup, but you can still make it out if you squint.

Am I claiming that the Harry Potter books constitute a seven-volume autobiography? No, of course not, don't be silly. Jo doesn't have green eyes like Harry. But clearly the life of the writer has informed the life of the protagonist, as ever it has been, as ever it shall be, world without end amen. Why would my relationship to Yunko be any different?

I can tell you, though, that while I did get laid off by a certain \$10 billion integrated global health enterprise headquartered in Pittsburgh, one of the leading nonprofit health systems in the United States, I did not subsequently get fired by it...them...that enterprise. Nor did I, ahem, conspire with four criminals to steal a dog. And that's about as much as my lawyer will let me say for the time being.

## 10/5/14 - I can laugh about this now

But if you'd asked me even a week ago I'm not sure that would have been true. Which is odd, because it's not like anything happened during the past week to change my perspective on the series of unfortunate events I'm about to relate. In fact, I can't even remember the last time I thought about the whole mess before today. So the question that comes to mind is:

How do we reach the point when it's okay to write about painful experiences?

(Which brings another question to mind: Why do I suddenly sound like Carrie Bradshaw?)

Maybe the answer will become apparent as I go on.

But knowing me, I wouldn't count on it.

So after *The Hot Dog* was published, people kept asking me if I was going to do a book signing. My answer was always some variation on "Sure, if there's a demand for it." I treated the question as a lark -- to be precise, I treated the questions as an exaltation of larks -- and answered in that spirit.

In truth, I'd never even considered such a thing. I thought book signings were the exclusive province of brand-name authors, the kind who can sell 50,000 copies of anything with their name on it. I thought the people who kept asking me about doing a signing didn't really understand how these things work.

But as time went on I started wondering: Well, why *not*? If my publisher was lukewarm about organizing a signing, why not do it myself? It would be great publicity and would generate some sales.

It would also give me a chance to meet some of my readers in person. This latter I would appreciate both as a social event and as an informal way to collect some demographic data about my customers. You never know how or when something like that might come in handy.

A signing would also be relatively simple to set up, I realized. All that were needed were a bookstore to host the event, some books to sell at the signing and a way to get the word out.

Well the books were easy enough to get. My publisher was happy to send me a box of author copies to sell at the event.

Spreading the word about the signing was pretty straightforward too. I simply emailed (or called, or in one case shouted out the bathroom window at) everyone whom I thought might be interested in attending. This included the people who'd asked me about a signing, individuals who were related to me and unable to come up with plausible excuses for not attending, and a certain person who shall remain nameless and who owed me \$20.

All I had left to do was find a bookstore willing to host the event. I admit I was a little trepidatious about this part. I had visions of my calls going unreturned, my emails being marked as Junk, my personal entreaties being met with casual indifference by disgruntled wage-slaves.

Turned out it was a piece of cake. My first choice was the lavish, enormous Joseph-Beth store not too far from my apartment, and they were more than happy to help me out.

At last everything was set. In the time leading up to the signing I practiced the new signature I was going to roll out just for the occasion: a bold, looping beauty of a thing, full of vim and verve; a John Hancock that would have impressed even John Hancock.

Two weeks out I got a phone call from someone at the Joseph-Beth store. It seems that in this post-literate age of ours a lavish, enormous bookstore is up against it, economically speaking -- even in Pittsburgh, which is perennially rated one of the most literate cities in the U.S. The bookstore was transferring its operations to a smaller space.

"Will the new place be open in time for my book signing?" I wanted to know.

"Definitely?" replied the young woman from Joseph-Beth, a classic up-talker.

"There's just one thing, though?" she went on.

"What's that," I said, determined to keep the rising intonation out of my own voice.

"In the new space we won't have a lot of room?"

"Yeah..."

"So for the signing? It'll make more sense for you to stand behind the counter?"

"I see," I said. "So do you want me to ring up the sales while I'm standing there."

"I'm glad you suggested that? Because I was gonna suggest the same thing?"

Well, it was better than nothing, I figured.

Come noon on the big day, a Saturday, I grabbed my box of books and bussed over to the shopping complex, which, like apparently every other shopping complex in the city, is built on the former site of a steel mill.

Just out of curiosity I went by the building where the lavish, enormous Joseph-Beth bookstore was once housed.

COMING SOON, a sign on the door read. LA FITNESS.

Figures. Frigging health freaks. "This flat-belly bullshit is killing the country," as Jack Nicholson once said.

I headed down the block toward Joseph-Beth's new, humbler digs. The sight of the familiar logo above the double doors drove home the point that for the first time in my life I would be entering a bookstore not as a customer but as an author. Goosebump city, man. What a great feeling.

There was a guy loitering near the entrance. A young guy, nondescript, but the way he watched me approach made me think he was there for the signing. I nodded at him, not wanting to get sidetracked by an autograph request but also not wanting to seem aloof. He nodded back.

I pulled on the door handle, which didn't give. I tried the other handle. Nada.

Was I too early?

"They're closed," the young guy said.

Well, duh. I tried to hide my irritation at having the obvious pointed out. Didn't want to be seen as one of those high-maintenance creative types. "Do you know what time they open?" I asked.

"Closed forever," the guy said, pointing.

COMING SOON, a sign on the window said, THE NORTH FACE.

(Just writing those words makes me wanna retch.)

"When did this happen?" I sputtered.

The guy shrugged, eyeing the box in my arms. "Hold on," he said, "are you John Novak?"

"Yeah," I told him. "Did you come here for the signing?"

"Yeah. So they didn't call you to say the store was closing, huh?"

"They sure didn't."

"Kinda sucks," the guy said.

"I'll say," I replied. "But hey, thanks for coming."

"Sure, sure," the guy said. "You still willing to sign my copy?"

"Absolutely," I said.

At that point I had a crystal clear vision of the beautiful black brand-new Sharpie marker I'd bought just for the signing. In my vision it was sitting in the kitchen of my apartment, where I'd left it.

"Um," I asked the guy, "any chance you have a pen?"

The best he could do was a pencil that appeared to have been sharpened by someone's teeth. Well, so be it.

"And the book?" I said.

He dug into his backpack and pulled out a Kindle.

"I bought the e-book when it was on sale," the guy said proudly. "Only cost me \$2.99!"

"What a great deal for you," I said, remembering all the money I didn't make during that promotion. "So you really want me to sign your Kindle?"

"I'll buy a hard copy if you want," the guy offered, nodding toward my box of books.

"Oh, no, that's okay," I said.

"No, really," he said.

"Well, thanks," I said, feeling like this day wasn't going to be a total loss.

And damn if the publisher hadn't sent me the wrong book. I had a box full of *Shit My Dad Says: The Complete Tweets Volume X*.

I offered to sign one of those, but my young friend begged off and said he had to get going. I thanked him for buying *The Hot Dog* and asked him what was his favorite part. "The scene with the thieves," he said.

I didn't press him for details.

# Truer to You

## (Commencement Speech)

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Novak never talked about his own childhood, and perhaps this speech helps us understand why.

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Childhood. What a rip-off. What an overrated, apotheosized sham.

I was not abused in any way. I was not bullied or teased or otherwise tormented. I wanted for nothing essential, and on top of that had plenty of non-essential things (toys, games, trading cards, Atari, a telescope). My parents loved me. I had cousins and friends to play with. School was easy and unburdensome.

So why do I look back on those times with such bitterness?

Partly because when it comes to attitudes about their childhoods, most people I know fall into one of two groups: the survivors or the fetishizers. The survivors are those who really did suffer, or struggle -- the neglected, the mistreated, the deprived. With them I have no quarrel.

The fetishizers like to reminisce about how great their childhoods were. Life was so much simpler then! You had more free time, fewer responsibilities. There was less bullshit. You said what you meant, not what you hoped people would think you meant. When you were hungry, you ate; tired, you slept. In one way or another, outside of school you spent most of your time at play. Your arteries were unclogged, your joints loose, your lungs clean, your cells free of cancer. Your saggy parts hadn't begun to sag and your hair hadn't begun to fall out. Your troublemakers (boobs, boners, balls, butts) were a source of comedy, not angst or shame. You didn't have to concern yourself with elections, tax brackets, retirement accounts, rush-hour traffic; with climate change, terrorism, moral decay, scarcity. Have I mentioned that life was simpler then?

What a load of horse shit.

Between the survivors and the fetishizers, between the poles of I'm Happy That's All Behind Me and Oh to Be a Kid Again, lies the great gray landmass on which most of us spend our childhoods. It's a place where things are basically okay (refer back to the second paragraph) but nothing can ever be great -- or at least, nothing can be great for long. This is not because greatness is impossible or unsustainable. It's because you don't control your life. You have very limited agency.

You can tell your mom you hate green beans, but that doesn't mean you won't have to eat them. You can ask your other mom to buy you a new phone, but the decision is ultimately out of your hands. Every day, in countless ways big and small, you are being steered, guided, encouraged, incentivized, forced, whatever, to do and say and think what other people, mostly adults, mostly with good intentions, want you to do and say and think. And I suppose, since this relieves you of the ongoing need to handle your own steering, guidance, incentivization, etc., it does make your life simpler. I guess that's why the term we use for people who don't think for themselves is simpletons.

Does being a simpleton sound like fun to you? Does it sound like those would be the best years of your life? For your sake, I sure hope not.

I'm here today to tell you that you don't have to be a simpleton. You can be, to paraphrase the same stupid poem that everybody likes to quote in speeches like this one, the captain of your own soul. It's not always easy; it's not always fun. But it is a better way to be. A truer way to be. Truer to you.

Now, a lot of you are probably wondering why I'm talking about these things to you, since your childhoods are behind you. It's because the principle will remain the same throughout your lives. You will go through the same periods we all go through -- the college years, the post-college years, your thirties, middle age, and so on. And you will find that there are always people and institutions and societal forces and apps offering to absolve you of the need to make your own choices. If you let them do that, you may or may not look back on those periods as happy times, but you will definitely not reflect on them as your times, when you were calling the shots. And all I can say is that I think you'll regret it. Unless you really are a simpleton, in the traditional sense of the word: someone who ain't so smart. People like that have to hand over control of their lives, because they are unfit to govern themselves.

Are those the kind of people you want to be surrounded by? I encourage all of you to answer that question honestly and embrace its implications fully. Whatever you decide, I wish you happy and productive lives.

Thank you very much and good luck in middle school, kids.



## Sandwich Fixings: Three Sequels to *The Hot Dog*

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John was always very forthcoming about his admiration for the Dortmunder books by Donald E. Westlake -- and about the influence of Westlake's *The Hot Rock* on Novak's *The Hot Dog*. But with all due respect to the late DEW, I think his literary progeny was being modest. To be sure, *The Hot Dog* borrows its narrative spine from *The Hot Rock*. But to call the former "as blatant an act of theft as the 2000 presidential election," as one critic sanctimoniously put it, is to neglect the brilliance with which Novak deconstructed the latter and reassembled the parts into something fierce and fresh.

This is not to run down Westlake. He's a fine writer, one of the bona fide treasures of American fiction. I only mean to point out that Novak need not take a back seat to anyone, not even the author he idolized.

Fortunately for Westlake fans, there are 14 Dortmunder novels, most of them still in print. (In addition to *The Hot Rock*, I highly recommend *Drowned Hopes*, *Don't Ask*, and *What's the Worst That Could Happen?*) Alas, there will only ever be one Yunko novel written by John Novak. Barring, of course, some kind of dramatic discovery -- a trunk full of forgotten manuscripts, or something similarly outlandish.

That's a true pity, if you ask me. For as the outlines below suggest, Novak had exciting plans for his beloved protagonist. He was ready to take Yunko, and us, on an unforgettable journey to an inescapable conclusion.

Death's gain is literature's loss. Rather than partake of a sumptuous feast of storytelling, we must content ourselves with the mere morsels left behind by a master chef cut down in his prime.

But they're tasty morsels, I can assure you. So dig in!

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## Book 2: The B. L. T.

In the immediate aftermath of the events of *The Hot Dog*, Yunko is mired in a drab, colorless life. Every morning he sees Mrs. Zachawiasewycz walking Guff and is reminded of his failure to steal the dog. Also, since he didn't finish the job, he didn't get paid, and now money's getting tight. With nothing else to do, Yunko has spent the last two days casing the new Rainbow store in his neighborhood. Robbing it would be a high-risk, low-reward undertaking, but he's desperate.

This morning Yunko is walking Guff because Mrs. Zachawiasewycz has jury duty. Who should appear but Ray Louis, the villain of *The Hot Dog*. Louis wants Guff so he can collect a big reward from the animal's owner. He confronts Yunko and demands the dog. Yunko picks up Guff and flees on a neighbor kid's bicycle.

Louis follows Yunko in his car. As Yunko nears the Rainbow store, he gets caught in a freakish tornado -- the first one in Pittsburgh in many years. Yunko and Guff are lifted over the store and...

...when Yunko awakens, he finds that he and the dog are in a bright, colorful place -- the wonderful world of Australia!

They're in a cottage in a small town. Yunko is quickly greeted by an old acquaintance, the private investigator Bree Clipping. (The cottage belongs to a friend of Bree's.) She tells Yunko that she was tailing Louis the day he came for the dog. When the tornado hit, Louis got out of his car and ran. Yunko's bike landed on him, knocking him out. Bree called for help and then spirited the unconscious, but unharmed, Yunko here via private jet, to keep them safe from her father, Rickson Porter.

Porter works for the dog's owner, Laughlin Jones, and he has been authorized to return Guff by any means necessary. A dangerous character to begin with, Porter has gone off the deep end since his wife ran off with all their money. He *must* have Jones's reward. He will kill anyone who stands in his way.

Bree hands Yunko the object that gives this story its title: the "bodgy little thingo," as Bree's Aussie friend calls it. It's a flash drive Bree took from Ray Louis.

The drive contains damaging information about Jones; it can be used to coerce Jones to call off Porter. But the drive is encrypted, and the only trustworthy person who can unlock the data is Yunko's old partner in crime, Bruno. Therefore Yunko has to get to a computer and contact Bruno back in the States. And in the meantime Bree will keep an eye out for her father. She knows Porter will track Yunko here eventually.

To get to a computer, Yunko and Guff have to go to a bigger town called Yellow Brick, just up the road. Along their way they are reunited with Yunko's criminal cohorts Ducky, Jerzy and Tom. These three learned about Yunko's predicament from Bree and came here to help. In this unfamiliar setting, and still suffering from jet lag, Yunko's friends are not quite themselves. Ducky is scatterbrained, Jerzy is surly and cynical, and Tom is emotionally fragile in the wake of breaking up with his girlfriend, Lauren.

Before the travelers can reach the town, Porter finds them. Despite not being at their best, Yunko's friends help him keep Porter at bay until Bree shows up to distract her father, allowing the others to flee.

In Yellow Brick, Yunko goes to FedEx Kinko's and emails Bruno. After the two exchange unpleasanties, Yunko explains what he needs and uploads the contents of the flash drive. Bruno examines them and tells Yunko he can't do anything unless he has the encryption key. Yunko relates this information to Bree, who reveals that Porter has the key.

The guys hide Guff and go to the Castle Hotel, where Porter is staying. Some local gang members hired by Porter (The Flying Monkeys) capture Yunko and drive off the others. Porter roughs up Yunko but gets nowhere vis-a-vis the dog's whereabouts. Fearing for Yunko's life, his friends snap out of their collective funk. Ducky gets his wits back, Jerzy softens up, and Tom overcomes his fragility. They go after Porter and the gang. In the ensuing fight, the gang is defeated and Porter's gun misfires, wounding him. Yunko and company escape with the encryption key. They retrieve Guff and go back to FedEx Kinko's.

Yunko contacts Bruno and gives him the key. Bruno tries it, but it doesn't work. He and Yunko start arguing over whose fault this is.

Then Guff, who is a bodgy little thingo in his own right, follows his canine instincts and tracks down Bruno in a next-door coffee shop!

It turns out that Bruno wanted to come to Australia with the others, but he was afraid they might not want to travel with him. So he came on his own and was waiting for a good time to tell them.

Amends are made. Bruno quickly figures out where he went wrong earlier and unlocks the contents of the flash drive. Yunko emails Jones to say that if he doesn't call off Porter and give up on getting Guff back, Yunko will make public some very embarrassing facts. Jones concedes defeat.

Bree accompanies the guys to the airport for their flight home. But Guff escapes his carrier and Yunko misses the flight. No matter: Bree offers Yunko a ride on the same private jet that brought her here, which was paid for by her former client, Laughlin's ex-wife, Carrie Furness.

Saddled with a noisy, nosy neighbor on the jet, Yunko takes some kind of heavy-duty sleeping pill...

...and wakes up in his bedroom in Pittsburgh, surrounded by Ducky, Jerzy, Bruno and Tom, as well as Mrs. Zachawiasewycz and Guff. They all look at Yunko expectantly as he tries to make sense of everything that's happened.

"You all right, Yunk?" Ducky says.

"As good as I can be." And then he starts to say something else, but falters.

"What is it, Yunk?"

"Well, I never thought you'd hear these words from me," Yunko says, "but there's no place like home."

### Book 3: The PB&J

On a cold, blustery December 23, Yunko broods in his apartment. Mrs. Zachawiasewycz stops by with a slice of pie. Yunko discovers after one bite that it's a meat pie, made with garlic bologna.

Mrs. Zachawiasewycz chides Yunko for keeping his thermostat set so low. He says he likes the cold, but in reality he can't afford kerosene for the heater.

Because of money woes such as this, Yunko finds himself considering a return to the kind of office work he used to do. Crime hasn't been paying for him lately. Perhaps because he's been playing it safe, sticking to penny-ante stuff like begging for "gas money" or pretending to be homeless.

Later that day, Ducky stops by to invite Yunko to a Christmas Eve party. A committed anti-socialist, Yunko tries several times to politely decline the invitation. Finally he placates Ducky by making a half-assed, heavily qualified commitment to come. The exchange puts Yunko in an even fouler mood, so that when a neighborhood girl shows up seeking donations for a toy drive, he makes an ass of himself.

Yet later, after breaking down and eating the rest of the pie, Yunko goes to bed, not feeling well. He dreams he is on an old-fashioned passenger train: the Pittsburgh, Baltimore & Jacksonville. He doesn't know where this train is taking him and he's afraid to find out. He's the only rider, and there's a pervading sense of dread in the car. Plus the food is terrible (and such small portions!).

Yunko's awakened in the early evening by an old partner in crime, Jamar -- someone Yunko hasn't seen for years. Jamar went legit at some point, which is why he and Yunko haven't been in touch. But he ran into Ducky and got Yunko's address and now he's here to warn Yunko away from the horrors of having a job. He has to work on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. And when he's at work, they expect him to actually work! And sure, they pay him for it, but only twice a month!

Yunko manages to convince Jamar to go home, but the visit leaves him deeply unsettled. He struggles to go back to sleep...if he was even awake to begin with. His head is reeling and nothing is clear.

He's next visited by Jerzy, who is desperately searching for his VHS copy of the Steelers' Super Bowl win over the Rams. He thinks he might have left it here, and he's right. Jerzy's so happy to have found the tape that he corrals Yunko into watching the game with him. (Yunko doesn't have a VCR, but Jerzy carries one around in his trunk for just such emergencies.) As the game plays out, Yunko remembers the first time he saw it -- back in 1980, when he was just a kid. Life was simpler then. All his needs were provided for, and outside of school he could do pretty much whatever he wanted. There was even a little red-haired girl who lived up the street.... While Jerzy gets teary-eyed watching his team overcome a fourth-quarter deficit, Yunko gets emotional thinking about happier times.

The next thing he knows Jerzy's gone without a trace, and someone else is knocking on the front door.

It's Tom and Lauren -- they're back together. Tom apologizes for the relative lateness of the hour, but they were in the neighborhood and saw a light on in Yunko's apartment and wanted to say hello. Tom pays regular visits to Mrs. Zachawiasewycz to check on her and Guff, and Lauren tagged along this time.

Tom and Lauren's account of their visit with Mrs. Zachawiasewycz and Guff does not jibe with Yunko's experiences of those two. He wonders (probably not for the first time) if he brings out the worst in people and dogs. Tom and Lauren encourage Yunko to come to Ducky's party, which promises to be a great time. Tom mentions how much fun Ducky's Thanksgiving party was. Despite himself, Yunko feels a pang of regret about the lame excuse he made for missing that.

Yunko sees Tom and Lauren out. Fully awake now, or so he believes, he settles down to watch some TV. Just as he realizes he has a cable hookup he never noticed before, and discovers he can pirate Mrs. Z.'s Super Extended Mega Deluxe package of channels, there's another knock at the door. This time it's Bruno, one of Yunko's least favorite people.

Bruno indicates that he can't speak. Yunko grabs paper and pencils and they exchange a series of notes. Bruno reveals that he's slightly loopy with painkillers. It seems he has discomfort in his throat that could be a sign of cancer, and a doctor appointment tomorrow will let him know the crucial test results.

Faced with his mortality, Bruno's been questioning his life choices. He wants to be less difficult to get along with; he wants to make peace with his turbulent past; he wants to stop playing it safe in life and live the way he sees fit.

All of this resonates deeply with Yunko. It also disturbs him to see how much he and Bruno are alike. He wishes Bruno luck tomorrow and encourages him to follow through with the changes he talked about. Bruno hopes Yunko will consider the same. They part awkwardly, not used to having enjoyed each other's company. On his way out Bruno accidentally bops Yunko's head with the door, so not everything has changed. Yunko collapses on the couch...

...and wakes up to find himself back on the Pittsburgh, Baltimore & Jacksonville. It's speeding down the track, headed for some ominous darkness in the distance. Yunko can't stop the train and he can't get off. A horrible fate is rushing to meet him. And the food hasn't gotten any better.

The whistle screams. The train picks up speed. Through the windows Yunko can see the sad faces of his friends, watching him go. He yells and pounds on the glass. The darkness looms large...

He wakes up in a cold sweat. But as soon as he sees he's not on the train, he starts to relax.

Somehow it's the afternoon of December 24. Yunko has no idea if any of the previous night's events took place. There's no mark on his head...but sometimes bruises don't appear right away. And while he did wake up on the couch, it's not unusual for him to sleep there. In the end, though, it doesn't matter. He knows what he needs to do. He puts on his nicest clothes and goes to Ducky's party.

Ducky is busy with host duties so Yunko doesn't see him at first. But Jerzy, Tom and Lauren are there, and they're all pleasantly surprised to see Yunko -- and stunned by his new, almost sunny disposition. Yunko tries to broach the subject of the night before with them, but he can't get any answers about whether that stuff really happened. And then Ducky spots him and is so thrilled Yunko showed up. The two men reaffirm their friendship and Yunko declares he's done forever with wage-work. Ducky says he has an idea for a heist; he and Yunko make plans to start working on it the day after Christmas. Ducky invites Yunko to drive to their childhood home with him on Christmas Day, but Yunko isn't ready for that just yet.

Mingling, Yunko spots an attractive red-haired woman. He approaches her and they chat. Just when things seem to be going well, Yunko notices Bruno entering the room. He excuses himself and goes over to ask Bruno about the test results. Bruno reveals that everything's fine -- his throat trouble stemmed from shouting too much while he was working as a department-store Santa. But how did Yunko know about all this? Bruno asks. Yunko reminds Bruno they just saw each other last night. Bruno has no memory of that. Yunko points out that he was a little out of it. Bruno says that doesn't sound right...although he can't be sure. There's one way to settle it, though -- he'll ask his girlfriend...the red-haired woman.

Yunko accepts this turn of events with something like grace.

After he leaves the party, he stops by Mrs. Zachawiasewycz 's house with a pizza (double anchovies) and a six pack. He even brings a jerky treat for Guff. The three of them spend a mostly pleasant hour together. They make plans to do it again soon.

Christmas morning, the neighbor girl finds a model train on her back porch. It's a perfect miniature of the old PB&J line. The note on the box simply says, "For toy drive."

The girl has a pretty good idea who left the train, but she'll never be sure. Which is just how Yunko wants it.

Because receiving stolen property is a crime, and he wouldn't want to get her in trouble.



## Book 4: The Hamm 'Burger

Inspired by the epiphany, of sorts, that he experienced several months earlier on Christmas Eve, Yunko works up the nerve to do something he's been putting off for many years: Visit his hometown. Yunko's friend Ducky, who's from the same town, provides the transportation and tags along. (Ducky has been visiting the town once a year, on Christmas, for all the time he and Yunko have lived in Pittsburgh. So he's less of a prodigal son than his friend, but still, at this point, more of an outsider than an insider.)

Leaving Pittsburgh one May evening, the two men head east for almost two hours. Yunko's plan is to show up unannounced and relatively late so as not to cause too much of a stir, initially. It's a small town, full of Yunko's extended family, and news travels quickly. Yunko doesn't want to have to make the rounds and see a bunch of people. He just wants to check in with his mom and dad. This could be the beginning of the process of rebuilding his relationship with them, but Yunko can't even be sure his parents want that. He hasn't talked to them in years.

There's no big falling out behind this. He and his parents simply never saw eye to eye on much. They were always so straight-and-narrow, and he was a thief from the day he was born. He left home at an early age to avoid having his parents implicated in or embarrassed by his criminal exploits. And in the last few years Yunko's been living under a false identity -- the consequence of a heist gone wrong -- so his parents couldn't have contacted him even if they'd wanted to.

On the outskirts of town is a convenience store/gas station. Yunko and Ducky stop so Yunko can use the bathroom. While Yunko's busy, Ducky heads for the store, aiming to buy a token gift for Yunko's parents. Ducky's always been thoughtful that way, the little kiss-ass.

When Yunko comes out of the bathroom, Ducky is right there, anxiously waiting for him. Before Ducky could go into the store, he heard a noise out back and went around to investigate. And what he saw was someone who looked like Yunko's father, Jack, but who was acting kind of weird.

Yunko and Ducky go behind the store and sure enough, it is Jack. He's pale and haggard, and bothered by an ear infection.

He tells Yunko he was betrayed by his brother, Chip, leaving him alone and destitute. Jack's been living out of a car for months, getting by on Dumpster-diving and petty theft. And what's worse, after Yunko's mother, Virginia, divorced Jack, she turned around and married Chip!

They are interrupted when the back door of the store opens. Jack flees into the night. Yunko leaves before he's spotted. He and Ducky return to the car, talking things over. Yunko believes his father's story and wants to set things right, but he doesn't know how to proceed. Ducky convinces him they should stick with the plan and go to his childhood home right now.

They do, and yes, Virginia is now married to Chip...who's always been a bit of a shady character even aside from the whole brother-betraying thing. He's a small-town crime boss. He and his partner Frank are also the township supervisors, which means they wield as much political power as there is to wield in this inconsequential western Pennsylvania hamlet.

After an extremely awkward visit, during which Virginia and Chip offer up their own version of events, and during which Yunko by turns seems sullen, depressed and unhinged, Yunko and Ducky leave.

Virginia and Chip discuss Yunko's behavior and agree that someone should keep an eye on him while he's in town. They enlist a pair of Yunko's cousins (Ricky and Greg) to do that. Then they call their neighbor Paul over, because he's their closest friend. After being filled in on the details, Paul (who's a bit clueless) suggests that Yunko has come back to town because he's in love with Paul's daughter Olivia -- the red-haired girl from Yunko's childhood. Paul goes so far as to promise to arrange a meeting between Yunko and Olivia -- a meeting Paul will listen in on, to see what he can find out.

Ducky and Yunko stay at Ducky's house (which Ducky has owned since his parents moved to South Carolina). First thing in the morning, Olivia shows up.

She's carried a torch for Yunko all these years. As soon as her dad told her Yunko was in town, she knew she wanted to reconnect. She brings Yunko to her house for coffee, and they have a difficult, cryptic conversation which Paul overhears. He reports back to Virginia and Chip. Meanwhile Ducky has breakfast with an old friend.

Yunko wrestles with indecision. To believe his father's story or not? And if he does believe it, to avenge his father or not? And how? He decides he needs more proof of Chip's wrongdoing. So before he and Ducky go to Virginia and Chip's that evening for dinner, Yunko uses Ducky's Amazon account to buy a digital copy of a movie he and his parents saw when Yunko was a teenager -- *Strange Brew*. And he asks Virginia if they can watch it after dinner, for old times' sake.

At a key moment in the movie, when the Chip-like character is revealed to be the villain, Yunko's stepfather becomes unhappy and leaves the room. For Yunko and Ducky, this is the proof they need. Yunko excuses himself so he can call the police and report Chip. But then he realizes he has no real proof and doesn't know where or how to find his dad. Therefore calling the cops is unlikely to achieve anything, and Yunko won't get a second chance to bring Chip to justice. So he puts his phone away and returns to the living room. Ducky is there alone. Virginia has gone out back to secretly call Paul. Yunko follows her out there.

Meanwhile, Chip knows that Yunko is onto him and pulls Ducky aside to say that this visit is upsetting Virginia. He asks Ducky to take Yunko back to Pittsburgh tonight.

Paul comes over and heads out back to find Virginia. He happens upon Yunko confronting Virginia. Paul hides, but at some point he gives himself away and Yunko (thinking he's Chip) punches him in the mouth. Chip comes to Paul's aide. Virginia threatens to call the cops unless Yunko and Ducky leave immediately. They do so, to avoid trouble. After they go, Chip calls Ricky and Greg and tells them to follow Yunko and Ducky back to Pittsburgh so they can find out where Yunko lives. At the first chance they get, Ricky and Greg are to plant drugs in Yunko's house or apartment and then call the police.

Olivia hears what happened to her father and blames Yunko. She realizes she has to stop filling the void in her life with relationships with unreliable men. She goes home and takes a luxurious bath complete with flower petals in the water. But she slips getting out of the tub and hits her head.

Olivia's brother Larry (a former classmate of Yunko and Ducky) gets word of what happened to Paul and rushes over.

It still hurts for Paul to talk, so Chip tells Larry that not only did Yunko hit Paul, he also said something crude about Olivia, sending her off in tears. Larry goes to Olivia's house and finds her in a coma. He takes her to the ER, all the while vowing to find Yunko and hurt him.

Later, Chip gets a call from Ricky and Greg. Yunko and Ducky spotted them and gave them the slip. Chip realizes Yunko and Ducky will be headed back here. He plots to exploit Larry's anger for his and Virginia's own protection/gain.

As Yunko and Ducky near town, Ducky gets a text from his breakfast friend about what happened to Olivia. Yunko fears he's somehow to blame, and insists they go the hospital to see her. There they run into Larry, Chip and Virginia. Tempers flare (goaded by Chip) and Yunko and Larry have to be separated.

Chip suggests Yunko and Larry can settle their feud in a fight at the local sportsmen's club. (In the woods behind the club, there is a little clearing that once served as a "ring" for bare-knuckles fighting. Drunk guys would brawl and other drunk guys would bet on the outcomes and Chip, sober as a judge, would handle the bets and sell the booze.) Yunko says that beyond the fact that fighting's stupid, he's in no shape for such a thing. But Larry, who tormented Yunko mercilessly when they were kids, pisses him off enough to change his mind.

Virginia wants no part of the fight, so she drops Chip at the club and tells him to text her when he wants a ride home.

Before the fight, Chip grabs some bottled water and beer from the bar in the sportsmen's club. Unknown to everyone but him, all the drinks have been spiked with rohypnol. (Chip's the kind of guy who keeps such things around for whatever eventualities arise.) He's hoping he can drug Yunko, Ducky and Larry, after which he'll kill them and get rid of their bodies. Chip has nothing against Larry, but he's a potential witness to whatever Chip does to the other two, so...

And just in case the drugged-drinks idea doesn't work the way it's supposed to, Chip has a gun.

The fight begins. Yunko's strategy is to absorb non-cataclysmic punishment early on and hope that Larry tires himself out. His anger has worn off and he just wants to get through this without getting badly hurt or losing face completely.

It's a warm day, and even though Larry is in better shape than Yunko, he's doing a lot more work. During a lull he grabs a bottle of water and drinks. Ducky notices Chip's reaction to this and gets the idea something's up. He confronts Chip, who draws his gun. Just then Virginia appears. After she dropped off Chip she got kind of pissed at all four of the men for letting it come to this, and came back to talk sense into them. But on the way she stopped by the bar and unknowingly grabbed a bottle of drugged water. Chip carelessly left one lying out. And Virginia's already drunk from it.

Chip is shaken by this sight, which allows Ducky and Yunko to subdue him. Ducky takes the gun. Larry tries to help Chip, but he's already feeling the effects of the rohypnol. He collapses. Fearing the water was poisoned, rather than just drugged, Yunko and Ducky tie up Chip. While they are preoccupied, Larry gets up and tries to get Chip's gun from Ducky. The gun goes off, wounding Ducky.

Chip tells Yunko that if anyone can clean up this mess, it's Chip's partner, Frank. Yunko carries Ducky to his car and drives him to Frank's house. But Frank plays dumb. He won't admit to being Chip's business partner, and he says he can't help. When Yunko pulls out Chip's gun, Frank relents.

Frank calls in a chit from a doctor acquaintance and gets Ducky the medical attention he needs -- without taking him to a hospital. Frank also directs someone to gather up Virginia, Chip and Larry. He wants Virginia brought here, where she can recover from the drug in safety and privacy. As for Chip and Larry, Frank intends to kill them. Chip because Frank wants full control of the business; Larry because he knows too much. As for Ricky and Greg, they got arrested for possession -- not their first offense -- and they're going to be in jail for a while.

Obviously, Frank's desire to eliminate witnesses doesn't bode well for Yunko and Ducky. As the two try to bargain their way out of this jam, Yunko's father shows up and attacks Frank. While he has Frank subdued, Jack tells Yunko and Ducky to run and save themselves. But Yunko can't let Jack take the fall for all of this, so he ties up Frank and then the four of them pile into Ducky's car and hit the road.

Yunko, Ducky and Jack discuss the problem as they head for Pittsburgh. Every idea they have leads them down a dark path.

As long as Frank is alive, none of them will be safe. But they can't kill Frank, either. As the tension rises, Yunko asks Ducky to stop at a convenience store so he can use the bathroom.

When Yunko hasn't come back after 10 minutes, Jack goes looking for him. When Jack reports that he can't find Yunko, Ducky gets out of the car to look. Before either of them realize what's happening, Yunko gets in the car and uses the spare key to drive away. Ducky and Jack fear the worst -- that Yunko's going to kill Frank himself.

But no. What happens is that Yunko takes Frank to the nearest state police barracks and hands him over. He also turns himself in, which allows us to finally learn his real name: Jonathan Hamm. Jon for short.

So yeah, living under a false identity hasn't been all bad for Yunko. It's been several years since anyone unfavorably compared him to the handsome, talented, successful actor.

In exchange for information about Frank and Chip, and about the heist Yunko tried to commit years ago (the one that forced him to change his identity), Yunko gets police protection for Ducky and his parents.

The crime ring is broken up and Jack is cleared of any wrongdoing. He and Virginia move on with their separate lives. Ducky's wound heals and he resumes his life in Pittsburgh. And wherever he goes, if anyone says an unkind word about Yunko, Ducky rushes to his friend's defense.

Meanwhile, Yunko has been placed in the federal witness relocation program. He's living under a new name in Pittsburg, Alabama. He does dull work in a dreary office. In his free time he sweats, kills mosquitoes, and tolerates his racist neighbor. He's had a funny feeling in his chest for the last couple of months, but the doctor can't find anything and Yunko's become resigned to it.

If only he were a little more self-aware, he'd know exactly what's wrong with him. He's beginning to feel something like contentment. And if worse comes to worst, one day he might even be happy.

# Spacebreaker: The Collected Screenplays

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Novak was a little sensitive about this project -- understandably so, as you will see. He was convinced that somehow, some way, George Lucas stole his idea. What Novak called *Spacebreaker* bears a striking resemblance to a little science fiction saga you might have heard of: Lucas's *Star Wars*. So yeah, sensitive doesn't even begin to describe Novak's attitude.

If there's an official version of the story, I haven't seen it. The version I know was a tale oft-repeated during Novak's and my college years. It was a story he told to impress women (or as we called them back then, cheese -- at least until someone pointed out that if women were cheese, men must be rats), to commiserate with fellow writer-wannabes, and to underline the prevalent undergraduate belief that Life's a Bitch and Then You Die.

If one is to believe the story, and I certainly do, Novak's bad luck vis-à-vis *Spacebreaker* was both the first and arguably the worst case of the poor guy being in the wrong place at the wrong time. He claimed he got the idea for his sci-fi movie back in late 1974, almost three years before the initial installment of George Lucas's space opera-cum-merchandise factory unspooled in theaters. And isn't it convenient, I am compelled to point out, that once Lucas saw his movie was a hit, he quickly retconned *Star Wars* into *Star Wars Episode 4: A New Hope*? Thereby staking out the notion that his film was just one part of a larger series of his own design, and thus couldn't have been appropriated from another source.

Critics of Novak's claim are quick to cite the fact that in late 1974, he was five years old. Uh-huh. And just what the hell does that have to do with anything? Has any of them ever heard the name Mozart? Nobody questions that child prodigy's bona fides. Could it be that the defenders of the so-called canon, the so-called classics, are biased toward the Mozarts of the world because they are white, male and dead? The question answers itself. Novak may have been a white male, but he never wrote like one. And he may be dead, but I guess not long enough to warrant the kind of special consideration which has been extended to so many lesser talents.

Remember, Novak never claimed to have written the script in 1974 -- only to have come up with the basic outline of the story. I've seen a copy of that outline, which was done in crayon on the lid of a pizza box, and you can't tell me a five-year-old didn't write it. All the elements of Lucas's movie were in place: the orphaned boy hero, the wise old man, the magical sword, the frightening villain, the beautiful girl. How can it be mere coincidence that two such similar stories bubbled up from the primordial narrative muck at around the same time?

Allow me to strengthen my case even more. Enlisting his mother's help, Novak copied his original outline onto plain paper and mailed it off to Universal Pictures with a note to the effect that if the company liked this story, they were welcome to turn it into a movie. With a child's guilelessness, he offered Hollywood his idea for free! And of course received no reply, not even a boilerplate rejection letter. But wait a minute, friends. Do you know who had a development deal with Universal in 1974? One George Horatio Lucas, who'd made the studio (and himself) millions with *American Graffiti*.

It has become part of *Star Wars* lore that Universal passed on the movie because they couldn't see its potential. Lucas took the project to 20th Century Fox and the rest, as they say, is history. Or should I call it *his* story? Lucas's story -- the one he tells to distract us from the truth. Because while I can't get anyone to speak on the record about this, credible sources have suggested to me that the real reason Universal passed on *Star Wars* is that they knew Lucas had stolen the idea, and didn't want to deal with the inevitable PR crisis and litigation.

Now, of course, the debate is moot. Novak's gone and Lucas sold out to Disney. Even if Novak's estate wanted to pursue the matter, they'd be ill-advised to go up against the Mouse House's crack legal team. Nobody gets money from Disney. (Unless of course it's Michael Ovitz. But even he had to settle for a paltry \$90 million -- not even enough for a decent jet.)

For those of us who support Novak's claim, the only consolation is that here, in this compendium, we can read the scripts John eventually did write. (With monumental and no doubt intentional irony, he followed Lucas's lead and expanded his original idea into a trilogy.) Doing so, we can see, in our mind's eyes, the movies that should have been made.



## SPACEBREAKER: A NEW THREAT

FADE IN:

SUPERIMPOSED ON A BLACK SCREEN: From the Annals of Arkiiv...

TITLE CARD:

SPACEBREAKER

A New Threat

It is a time of unrest. Radical Activist insurgents, operating from a secret lair, have won a minor victory against the forces of the Incorporated Planets.

Activist infiltrators gained access to proprietary data concerning the IP's new technology, the Defense Star, a bleeding-edge consumer platform with enough high-end functionality to penetrate any market.

Pursued by valiant IP security contractors, Activist double agent Princess Kia flees justice aboard an alien-made spaceship. If she delivers the pirated data to her comrades, freedom will die and the galaxy will fall into chaos...

EXT. SPACE

We see the desert planet Tanix. Then an enormous Activist ship, the Regulator, roars into view, filling the frame. The ship's rear weapons are firing at an unseen enemy.

Seconds later we see the pursuer: the relatively tiny IP space defender Exceptionalist.

One of Exceptionalist's laser cannons lands a crippling blow on the Activist ship.

INT. REGULATOR - MAIN CORRIDOR

The critical blast is felt throughout the ship as two androids, AL33TA and 88-XOR, hurry down the corridor. "Lita" is brown-skinned, short and thickly built. She communicates in electronic noises. 88-XOR is black-skinned, tall and thin.

88-XOR reacts to an ominous noise.

88-XOR

They've hit the engines! What  
are we going to do?

Activist insurgents, wearing black uniforms, hurry past the androids and station themselves along the walls. They train their laser rifles on the door at the end of the corridor.

88-XOR

They're coming for us, Lita!  
We androids always get the  
worst of it.

The insurgents stare at the door intently as loud mechanical noises emanate from outside the ship.

88-XOR

What's that?!

EXT. SPACE

The Exceptionalist has lowered itself onto the Regulator.

INT. REGULATOR - MAIN CORRIDOR

The insurgents train their weapons on the door. It opens to admit a single white-armored PEACEKEEPER. His hands are raised and he carries no weapon.

PEACEKEEPER

It's okay. I'm unarmed.

The insurgents unleash a barrage of blaster fire, shredding the poor peacekeeper. More peacekeepers appear in the doorway and a shootout begins. Lethal bolts of energy fill the corridor.

The insurgents are quickly routed and they flee like cowards.

Meanwhile, the androids duck into a connecting passageway and, in the confusion, get separated.

In the newly quiet corridor, the smoke clears and through the door comes DAD FATHER, the second most powerful man in the galaxy. President of the Incorporated Planets. He is tall and imposing, and encased from head to toe in protective gray armor. Only his striking blue eyes are visible to us.

He proceeds through the corridor.

INT. REGULATOR - ALCOVE

PRINCESS KIA SEDANA, a beautiful teenage girl clad in gray, appears to be hugging Lita, and Lita is loving it. In fact, Kia is inserting a data card into a port in Lita's back. As the card goes in, Lita giggles.

INT. REGULATOR - PASSAGEWAY

88-XOR looks for his companion.

88-XOR

Where'd you go, chica?

88-XOR turns and looks down the passageway. There at the end, in a haze, stand Lita and the princess. Kia gazes into Lita's optical sensors, caresses her cheek-equivalent, and then quickly moves out of sight.

88-XOR

Oh, come on. At a time like this you're hooking up?

Lita brushes past 88-XOR and heads down the corridor. 88-XOR gives chase.

88-XOR

I mean, show some self-control.

Lita grunts and keeps going.

INT. REGULATOR - AUXILIARY CORRIDOR

President Father gazes mournfully at the corpses of peacekeepers and insurgents. Suddenly an ACTIVIST who was only pretending to be dead rises up and attacks. Father quickly overpowers the Activist and puts him in a choke hold without applying fatal pressure.

An IP OFFICER approaches hesitantly.

FATHER

It's okay, I have things under control.

OFFICER

The Defense Star data are not on the ship's hard drive.

The Activist goes for a hidden blade. Father increases the pressure and the would-be attacker drops the blade.

FATHER

I don't want to hurt you.  
Where are the stolen data?

The Activist stomps on Father's heavy boot. It has little effect.

FATHER

You're angry. I respect that.

ACTIVIST

We "stole" nothing! Private property is a tool of the oppressors!

FATHER

If you did nothing wrong, why were you running away from us?

The Activist shifts his position so that Father's chokehold completely cuts off his air supply. Despite Father's resistance, the Activist asphyxiates himself.

ACTIVIST

Long...live...Activism!

Sadly, Father lowers him to the floor.

FATHER

Such passion, but so misguided.  
Commander, search the auxiliary  
drives and look for portable  
storage devices. And bring me  
the Princess.

OFFICER

Yes, Mr. President.

FATHER

And tell your men to set their  
weapons to stun.

INT. REGULATOR - ANOTHER PASSAGEWAY

Kia hides behind a bulkhead. She hears peacekeepers  
approaching and tries to sneak away.

PEACEKEEPER

There she is! Don't hurt her!

Kia turns, her face hardened. She shoots the  
peacekeeper without remorse. Before she can shoot  
again she is hit and stunned.

PEACEKEEPER

Tell the President we have her.

INT. REGULATOR - ESCAPE VEHICLE LOADING AREA

Lita opens the hatch of an escape vehicle and steps in.

88-XOR

What are you doing? These  
modules are for human use only!

Lita beeps and buzzes.

88-XOR

You may IDENTIFY as human, but that's not what it says on your manufacturing certification. And however you and I might feel about it, the law is the law! Are we going to start letting anyone go into an escape vehicle? Pretty soon they'll all be full of -- escaping predators!

Lita changes the subject abruptly.

88-XOR

What secret data are you talking about?

Lita lets loose a stream of invective.

A peacekeeper arrives.

PEACEKEEPER

Hi there. Something I can h--

His head gets shot off by an Activist. Terrified, 88-XOR leaps into the escape vehicle.

EXT. REGULATOR

The escape vehicle separates from the ship.

INT. EXCEPTIONALIST - TRACTOR BEAM STATION

The escape vehicle appears on a display, observed by a tractor beam operator and an officer.

TRACTOR BEAM OPERATOR

No human life on this one.  
Should I bring it in anyway?

OFFICER

No, let's not waste government resources on an empty pod.

INT. ESCAPE VEHICLE

Lita and 88-XOR look out at the receding ship.

88-XOR

Do you ever wonder if we're on  
the right side in this war?

Lita scoffs at the suggestion.

88-XOR

Well, everyone I've ever met  
from the IP has seemed  
perfectly decent.

Lita dismisses this notion with angry noises.

88-XOR

"Discrimination"? You're in  
the galaxy illegally! Don't  
you think that has something to  
do with it?

Lita chirps and beeps.

88-XOR

I am aware, thank you very  
much, of how many androids  
"like me" are in the  
penitentiary system. But  
what's more likely? That black  
androids turn to crime because  
they've been mistreated for  
centuries and don't have access  
to the same opportunities as  
others? Or that most of them  
are just bad? OBVIOUSLY the  
second one.

Lita sighs.

INT. REGULATOR - AUXILIARY CORRIDOR

Kia is escorted by a group of peacekeepers. Her hands  
and feet are unbound and everyone respects her personal  
space. Near the end of the corridor the procession is  
greeted by President Father and a commander.

KIA

Ah, President Father -- of course. Overstepping your authority once again. The IP Board of Directors will not be happy to hear about this.

FATHER

With all due respect, Your Highness, your cover has been blown. We know you're an Activist double agent, and we know you stole proprietary data. If you tell me where--

KIA

Look, I'm a member of the Board on a routine business trip to--

FATHER

If you won't tell me where the data are, I have no choice but to detain you. It's a matter of galactic security.

(off Kia's  
silence)

Take her to the Presidential Suite and see to her every need. And remember, she is innocent until proven guilty.

Kia is taken away. The commander turns to Father.

COMMANDER

Detaining her is risky. The Board has Activist leanings.

FATHER

I have to follow the facts, Commander, and they tell me she's an enemy of the IP. I'm going to discuss things with her calmly and hope she'll tell me where the Activist base is.



COMMANDER  
She'd rather be a martyr.

FATHER  
There's no chance of that.  
We're not savages.

Another officer approaches Father and the commander.

OFFICER  
Mr. President, the data are  
gone. An escape vehicle was  
launched, headed for Tanix.

Father turns to the commander.

FATHER  
Send peacekeepers to the  
planet's surface immediately,  
Commander. The fate of the  
galaxy hangs in the balance.

EXT. SPACE

The Exceptionalist orbits Tanix.

EXT. TANIX - OPEN DESERT - DAY

Sand everywhere. The wreckage of the escape vehicle is  
already being swallowed up by the desert.

The androids trudge along.

88-XOR  
I hate sand! It's coarse and  
rough and it gets everywhere.

Lita answers with unsympathetic beeps.

Suddenly she whistles, makes a sharp right turn and  
starts off in a new direction.

88-XOR  
Where do you think you're  
going?

A stream of electronic noises is the reply.

88-XOR

Uh-uh, girl. That's a broken  
servo-joint waiting to happen.

Lita makes a counterpoint.

88-XOR

We're not going to find  
civilization that way, either!

Lita responds testily.

88-XOR

Don't throw shade at me, honey.

Lita squawks in reply.

88-XOR

I'm calling bullshit on this  
mission business you keep  
talking about. You're  
delusional! We're hopelessly  
lost and it's just a matter of  
time before our moving parts  
stop working. You want to die  
alone, be my guest. But I  
won't be joining you!

88-XOR gives Lita a flamboyant slap and walks away.

Lita's reply is a rude sound. She turns and heads off.

EXT. TANIX - OPEN DESERT - DAY

88-XOR lumbers through a difficult stretch of sand. He  
stops and looks around for Lita. No sign of her.

88-XOR

Whatever.

He resumes his trek. After a moment, he spies a faint  
glimmer off in the distance -- some kind of vehicle.

88-XOR

Well, either I'm saved or I'm  
hallucinating.

The android waves frantically and yells at the  
approaching transport.

88-XOR

Yoo-hoo, over here! Damsel in  
distress-type situation!

EXT. TANIX - CANYON - SUNSET

Lita proceeds through a dimly lit canyon. She stops in  
response to a noise, but sees nothing. She continues.

She is being watched. Small figures move around  
furtively, getting themselves into position.

One of the figures emerges and zaps Lita with an  
electromagnetic pulse. The android lights up and then  
goes dark. She crumples to the canyon floor.

A host of the small figures pours from its hiding  
places. These creatures are called Fidushis. All we  
can see of them is glowing green teeth. They surround  
the fallen android like pallbearers and pick her up.

EXT. TANIX - CANYON - SUNSET

The Fidushis carry Lita into their giant dune sled.

INT. DUNE SLED - HOLD AREA

Lita's power comes back on and she finds herself in a  
dark, cluttered hold full of parts and scrap. She  
wanders into...

INT. DUNE SLED - HOLDING CELL

...the next room and sees that it is full of androids  
in various states of disrepair.

88-XOR (O.S.)

Lita?!

Lita turns to see 88-XOR. She burbles excitedly and the androids embrace.

88-XOR  
Oh, it's so awesome to see you.  
(turns serious)  
Hey, you know all that nasty  
stuff I said?

Lita acknowledges this.

88-XOR  
Totally meant it.

EXT. TANIX - CANYON - SUNSET

The dune sled rumbles off toward the horizon.

EXT. TANIX - DESERT - DAY

Peacekeepers examine tracks around the escape vehicle that brought the androids to Tanix.

FIRST PEACEKEEPER  
Must have been a couple of  
androids in that pod.

A second peacekeeper, further away, finds the place where the tracks diverge.

SECOND PEACEKEEPER  
They went in different  
directions. I hope they're  
okay in this heat, poor things.

EXT. TANIX - OPEN DESERT - DAY

The dune sled barrels through the desert.

INT. DUNE SLED

88-XOR and Lita sit among the other androids. Lita snores lightly.

88-XOR  
Wake up, honey.

The dune sled comes to a stop, creating an air of nervous anticipation among the androids. A hatch opens, letting in Fidushis and blinding sunlight.

88-XOR

And what fresh hell is this?

A Fidushi approaches them, EMP weapon in hand.

88-XOR

Take her first! She has a  
higher tolerance for pain.

The Fidushi herds them both toward the hatch.

EXT. TANIX - SLOUGH HOMESTEAD - DAY

The dune sled sits a short distance from a modest desert dwelling. The Fidushis scurry about getting the androids lined up neatly in front of the vehicle.

MARTEN SLOUGH, clad in white, emerges from the home and comes over to inspect the androids. He is trailed by his petulant 17-year-old nephew, JAKK SPACEBREAKER. Jakk rocks a gray outfit.

A Fidushi walks alongside the humans, chattering at them in an alien tongue.

GENIVER (O.S.)

Jakk!

JAKK

Yeah?

GENIVER (O.S.)

Please tell your uncle we need  
an android that knows Phraxis.

JAKK

(aside)

Why do I have to tell him?

Jakk rejoins his uncle and the Fidushi.

MARTEN  
(to 88-XOR)  
Do you know Phraxis?

Jakk shakes his head in frustration.

88-XOR  
Well, it's a vulgar language,  
lacking any sense of  
couth...but yes, I have been  
known to traffic in it.

MARTEN  
Good. Jakk, take this one and  
that red one to the shop and  
clean them up.

JAKK  
Aw, c'mon. I was gonna waste  
time with my friends!

MARTEN  
But Jakk -- if we don't get  
those framjets uncroggled today  
we'll lose the whole farm.  
Your aunt and I will be  
destitute.

JAKK  
Yeah, so?  
(off Marten's  
unwavering look)  
All right, come on, you stupid  
androids! We wouldn't want  
Uncle Marten and Aunt Geniver  
to be destitute.

Lita watches forlornly as the two androids follow Jakk.

Jakk turns and sees that the red android is lagging.

JAKK  
Hurry it up, will ya?!

The red android takes another step. Then it stops in its tracks and simply falls apart.

JAKK  
Looks like you picked a real  
winner, here, Uncle Marten!

Marten turns and sees what has happened. He says something to the Fidushi.

Lita sees her opportunity and begins clamoring for attention. 88-XOR taps Jakk on the shoulder.

88-XOR  
(re: Lita)  
I beg your pardon, sir, but  
that unit is in good condition.

Jakk gives 88-XOR a death-stare.

JAKK  
Don't. Ever. Touch me.  
Again.

88-XOR cringes.

JAKK  
And don't call me "sir," idiot.  
Call me..."Master."

88-XOR  
Oh my.

JAKK  
Uncle Marten--  
(re: Lita)  
--what about that one?

MARTEN  
(to Fidushi)  
That one instead?

The Fidushi nods. Lita hurries over.

88-XOR

You won't regret it...Master.  
She's a hard worker who knows  
her place.

JAKK

Well, at least one of you does.

Lita whistles appreciatively.

88-XOR

(to Lita)

It wasn't that clever.

INT. SLOUGH HOMESTEAD - WORKSHOP - DAY

The room is dim and dusty. Equipment is strewn about.

Jakk sits idly, daydreaming. The androids don't know  
what they're supposed to do.

88-XOR

I hope you don't think I'm  
telling you your business,  
Master, but aren't we supposed  
to be uncroggling the framjets?

JAKK

The framjets are fine. The old  
bastard doesn't know what the  
hell he's talking about. And  
what do I care if they lose the  
farm? I hate this place, and I  
hate them. All they've ever  
done is be nice to me and I'm  
sick to death of it!

He gets up and begins pacing agitatedly.

JAKK

You know, they didn't have to  
take me in when I was an  
orphan. They should have just  
let me fend for myself.



88-XOR

How old were you?

JAKK

Two weeks.

88-XOR

Oh.

JAKK

Anyway, let's get you two  
cleaned up, in case Uncle  
Tight-Ass checks on me.

He grabs a small cleaning tool and works on Lita.

JAKK

Geez, bathe much?

Lita offers the equivalent of a shrug.

88-XOR

In her defense, we have been  
pretty busy lately, working for  
the Activists.

JAKK

You two are involved in that?  
Cool. Ever killed anyone?

88-XOR

Um, not exactly, no.

JAKK

Man, I'd kill to kill someone.  
Or at least blow some shit up.

He works at an obstruction in one of Lita's data ports.

JAKK

Looks like you get around a  
bit, don't you, young lady?

Lita giggles. Jakk tinkers until there is a loud ZAP!

Lita's optical sensors emit twin beams of light that form a holographic image in front of her. It's Kia.

KIA

Help us, Hiro Watanabi. We have nowhere else to turn.

JAKK

What the--

Lita feigns ignorance. Meanwhile, the holovid cycles endlessly through the same two lines.

88-XOR

Are you kidding me, girl?

(pointing)

That, Lita, that. The holovid right in front of you!

Lita offers an explanation.

88-XOR

She says it's just a glitch, Master. Random content that never got overwritten.

JAKK

But you have to tell me who this chick is. She's the hottest girl I've ever seen!

(shudders)

Why do I feel icky?

88-XOR

She was on the ship--

JAKK

Shouldn't there be more of this? Maybe if I can...

Jakk reaches toward Lita but she backs away.

88-XOR

Good job, honey. Piss off our new owner. Fantastic idea.

Lita whistles and beeps in reply.

88-XOR

She says she belongs to Hiro Watanabi, who lives around here. The full message can be viewed only by him.

JAKK

Hiro Watanabi? Could that be Xen Watanabi? Nah, what are the odds?

88-XOR

Wait, so you know a Watanabi?

JAKK

He lives out in the deepest part of the desert. Maybe if I could see the whole video...

Lita beeps something to 88-XOR.

88-XOR

She thought you'd never ask. All you have to do is disarm her roaming inhibitor.

Jakk disarms the device and the holovid disappears.

JAKK

Hey! What happened?!

Lita whistles innocently.

GENIVER (O.S.)

Jakk? Time to eat!

JAKK

Coming!

Jakk gives Lita a look of disdain.

88-XOR

She's a piece of work.

JAKK

See if you can talk some sense  
into her while I'm gone.

He leaves.

88-XOR

You know you're gonna get us  
both melted down, right?

Lita beeps inquisitively.

88-XOR

You led him on and left him  
hanging, you tease!

INT. SLOUGH HOMESTEAD - DINING AREA

Jakk joins his AUNT GENIVER and uncle at the table,  
which is laid out with a meal.

JAKK

Looks like one of those  
androids you bought might be  
hot. She claims to belong to  
some Hiro Watanabi dude.

Uncle Marten maintains a poker face.

JAKK

Which made me think of Xen.  
You know, the pedophile?

MARTEN

Pedophile? Who says?

JAKK

I saw it on Spacebook.

MARTEN

I guess it has to be true,  
then. Anyway, the android is  
ours now. Wipe her hard drive  
and let's put this behind us.

JAKK

But what do we do when dude  
shows up to claim her?

MARTEN

"Dude" isn't going to show up,  
because "dude" has been dead  
for a long time -- he died the  
same time as your dad.

JAKK

Wait, Hiro knew my pops? Why  
didn't you say so?!

MARTEN

I didn't say that.

JAKK

Blah blah blah. Why are you  
keeping secrets from me?!

Geniver gets up from the table.

GENIVER

Why does anyone keep secrets  
from a child? In a misguided  
attempt to protect him. And it  
always backfires.

MARTEN

What's that, Gen?

GENIVER

Anyone need anything?

MARTEN

Listen, Jakk. Forget about  
Hiro. We have to uncroogle  
those framjets!

JAKK

Oh yeah, the framjets. You know what -- I took care of it already. We're good. So I guess I can go join the military after all. Death and destruction, baby!

MARTEN

Wait -- the framjets are done?

JAKK

That's what I said, yo.

MARTEN

Even the Illudium Q-36?

JAKK

Yeah, of course, all of them.

MARTEN

Because that's the most important one. If we don't uncroogle that one, we'll all die horribly...

JAKK

Good thing it's done then.

MARTEN

...our skin ripped off our bodies, our bones liquefied...

JAKK

Crossed it off the list.

AUNT GENIVER

Doesn't it take at least a day to uncroogle the Illudium Q-36?

MARTEN

At least, yeah.

JAKK

All right, all right! I'll go  
get started.

Jakk leaves in a huff.

GENIVER

At some point he's going to  
figure out there's nothing  
special about the Q-36.

MARTEN

Yeah, but in the meantime we'll  
keep him out of trouble for at  
least a little while longer.

GENIVER

The problem is, Jakk's not a  
nice person, Marten. He's  
pretty much a sociopath.

EXT. TANIX - SLOUGH HOMESTEAD - SUNSET

As the sun sets, Jakk goes into the workshop.

INT. SLOUGH HOMESTEAD - WORKSHOP

The androids are nowhere to be seen. Jakk picks up a  
pinging device and presses a button. A steady beeping  
sound leads him to the hiding, cowering 88-XOR.

JAKK

What's going on?

88-XOR

First of all, blame Lita. It's  
all her fault, her and that  
bullshit about the "mission."  
Secondly...well, I guess the  
first thing just about covers  
it. Color me blameless.

JAKK

Lita's gone? Aw, crap!

Jakk races out of the workshop followed by 88-XOR.

EXT. TANIX - SLOUGH HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Perched atop a small rise near the workshop, Jakk uses laser binoculars to scan the horizon for signs of Lita.

88-XOR

She's always been kind of uppity, you know. And yes, I did just say "uppity," so deal.

JAKK

No signs of her. And we can't go out in the speeder this late. We'll have to wait for sunrise. Damn it!

MARTEN (O.S.)

Jakk, I'm shutting the power down for the night.

JAKK

(to Marten)

I'll be there in a few minutes!

He makes a final half-hearted scan with the binoculars.

JAKK

Crap. I screwed up and they're gonna hold me accountable. Why is it always my fault when I do something wrong?!

88-XOR

Life is so unfair...Master.

EXT. TANIX - OPEN DESERT - DAY

Jakk and 88-XOR zoom across the landscape in a speeder. Jakk's a reckless driver and 88-XOR is sweating rivets.

INT. JAKK'S SPEEDER



JAKK  
(looking at  
scanner)  
I think I found her.

EXT. TANIX - CANYON ENTRANCE - DAY

The speeder is observed from above by a pair of dark-skinned, teenaged NATIVES, both armed with laser rifles. One of the natives takes aim at the speeder, but the other makes a "lower your weapon" gesture.

EXT. TANIX - CANYON FLOOR - DAY

The speeder is parked on the canyon floor. Jakk and 88-XOR catch up to Lita, plodding along grimly.

JAKK  
So much for me ever trusting  
you again, you little minx.

Lita offers a weak rationalization.

88-XOR  
Yeah, well, you belong to  
Master Spacebreaker now, honey.  
And after what you did you'll  
be lucky if he doesn't turn you  
into a thermostat.

JAKK  
Let's just get home as quickly  
as we can, before Uncle Marten  
figures out what happened.

Suddenly Lita becomes very agitated.

JAKK  
Nice try, but there's no way  
I'm falling for that.

88-XOR  
She's telling the truth. There  
are several life forms  
approaching us from the south.

JAKK  
Probably terrorists trying to  
suicide-bomb us. Come on.

EXT. TANIX - CANYON - RIDGE - DAY

Jakk surveys the canyon with his binoculars.

JAKK  
Well, I see a couple of maggos  
but no --. Aw geez!

BINOCULARS POV - A maggo (large beast of burden) is  
defecating disgustingly.

Suddenly a native's angry face appears in the frame!

EXT. TANIX - CANYON - RIDGE - DAY

The native howls, startling 88-XOR, who falls off the  
ridge. Lita runs for cover.

Jakk scrambles to his feet. The native swings his  
rifle at Jakk's head and misses. A second blow knocks  
Jakk out. The native raises his weapon over his head  
and lets out a triumphant yell.

EXT. TANIX - CANYON FLOOR - DAY

Lita watches from a hiding place while the natives set  
down the unconscious Jakk.

FIRST NATIVE  
(So now what do we do? He  
needs medical attention.)

SECOND NATIVE  
(I told you to scare him away,  
not knock him out!)

FIRST NATIVE  
(He was on our land!)

SECOND NATIVE

(Oh yeah, like that's never happened before. You going to assault every white guy who violates the treaty?)

FIRST NATIVE

(Some treaty. They come and go as they please. And what do we get? Duty-free narcotics and a lousy betting parlor!)

From nearby comes a terrible, prolonged shriek. The source of it is a raggedy creature in black robes.

SECOND NATIVE

(Oh shit, it's the pedophile!)

FIRST NATIVE

(Run!)

They flee. Lita keeps herself hidden. As she watches, the creature approaches. This is XEN WATANABI.

Lita betrays her presence to Xen.

XEN

Oh, hello. You can come out of there, if you want. There's nothing to be afraid of.

Lita joins Xen at Jakk's side. She beeps concernedly.

XEN

He'll be all right.

JAKK

What happened?

XEN

You took a pretty good knock. Good thing I got here before those savages could have their way with you.

JAKK

Xen! You're just the guy we were looking for.

XEN

Yes, it's funny how those things work, isn't it?

JAKK

This android keeps claiming she's the property of Hiro Watanabi. Do you know him?

XEN

Yes, Jakk, it's safe to say Hiro and I know each other. Quite well, as a matter of fact. Extremely well.

JAKK

My uncle says he's dead.

XEN

Extremely well, Jakk.

JAKK

So he's not dead?

XEN

No, Jakk, I'm not dead.

JAKK

Right, but what about... Oh! So why didn't you just say so?

XEN

One wants a hint of elegance.

JAKK

So Lita does belong to you?

XEN

Not that I'm aware of, but--

His attention is drawn to noises O.S.

XEN  
Perhaps we should continue this  
conversation at my place.

He gives Jakk a knowing look. Suddenly the young man  
remembers the Spacebook rumors.

JAKK  
Um...

XEN  
Before the savages figure out  
they have us outnumbered.

JAKK  
Oh yeah! Right!  
(looks around)  
Hey, where's Eighty-eight?

EXT. TANIX - ANOTHER PART OF THE CANYON - DAY

Jakk, Xen and Lita find the other android lying in a  
heap. One of his arms has come off.

88-XOR  
Well it's about time.

Jakk helps 88-XOR to his feet. Xen picks up the  
severed limb.

XEN  
Come, we must hurry.

INT. WATANABI'S HOME

The humans and androids sit in Xen's simple dwelling.  
Jakk works on 88-XOR's arm.

JAKK  
But my dad wasn't in the  
military. He captained a  
merchant vessel.

XEN

So says your uncle. But your father and I fought together.

JAKK

You were in the Drone Wars?

XEN

Yes. We were part of the elite order that protected the galaxy: the Star Knights.

JAKK

No shit.

XEN

Your dad was the best pilot I've ever seen, and a great Star Knight, and a good friend -- most of the time.

JAKK

Most of the time?

XEN

(backtracking)

Perhaps we shouldn't get into that just now. I just remembered that I have something for you.

Xen rummages through a storage bin. Jakk finishes work on 88-XOR's arm. Xen hands Jakk a laser sword.

XEN

Your dad asked me to give this to you. I would have done it earlier, but your aunt and uncle objected. They were probably worried you'd cut off your arms and legs like-- Well, never mind. Here.

JAKK

What is it?

XEN

Your dad's laser sword. Weapon  
of choice for all Star Knights.

Jakk pushes a button on the handle. A long white laser  
beam emerges.

XEN

For a thousand generations Star  
Knights maintained order in the  
People's Democratic Republic of  
the Galaxy. Before the dark  
times. Before the Incorporated  
Planets.

JAKK

So how did my dad die?

XEN

Put it this way: a young Star  
Knight named Dad Father -- my  
protege -- turned to evil and  
then helped the IP hunt down  
and destroy the Star Knights.  
He betrayed and murdered your  
dad...so to speak. Now the  
Star Knights are practically  
extinct, and all because Dad  
Father was corrupted by the  
absolute form of the Power.

Jakk turns off the laser sword.

JAKK

My father was corrupted?

XEN

Dad Father was corrupted by the  
Power, not your father.

JAKK

What kind of name is Dad F--?

XEN

(mind tricking)

Perhaps you'd like to hear more  
about the Power instead.

JAKK

Yes. I would like that.

XEN

It's what gives a Star Knight  
his special abilities. It's a  
form of energy generated by  
everything in the galaxy. It  
permeates all matter and  
governs all interactions.

JAKK

Wait, like midichlorians? I  
read about them on Spacebook.

XEN

NOTHING like midichlorians.

Lita beeps.

XEN

So you have a message for me,  
do you? Well, let's see it.

The holovid of Kia beams out of Lita's optical sensors.

KIA

Hiro Watanabi, years ago you  
fought in the Drone Wars. Now  
the Activists need your help in  
their struggle to overthrow the  
Incorporated Planets. I have  
transferred data critical to  
the survival of Activism onto  
the hard drive of this android.

88-XOR

See that, Lita? She didn't  
even call you by name. She was  
using you!



Lita groans.

KIA

You must transport this android safely to Aventus, where my mother lives. She'll know what to do. Help us, Hiro Watanabi. We have nowhere else to turn.

(beat)

Was that all right? Or should we do another take?

The transmission ends. Xen ruminates on the message. Jakk gazes longingly at the spot where Kia appeared.

XEN

Come with me to Aventus.

JAKK

I don't even know where it is.

XEN

I need your help, Jakk. Activism needs your help. And the princess needs your help.

JAKK

The princess...

(shudders)

No, forget it. I'm basically one of those all-talk, no-action types of people. Plus, what if I try to join the Activists and they don't want me? I just don't think I can take that kind of rejection.

XEN

That's your uncle Marty talking.

JAKK

Oh geez, my uncle. What am I  
supposed to tell him about  
where I've been all day?

XEN

Come with me, Jakk. You can be  
my student, just like your--  
(beat)  
It'll be fun!

JAKK

Look, Xen, part of me really  
wants to go with you and have  
an adventure. But as long as  
my aunt and uncle are alive, I  
have to stay here.

XEN

I'm sorry you feel that way.

EXT. SPACE

The Exceptionalist heads toward the Defense Star.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONFERENCE ROOM

IP military officials sit around a table. COMMANDER  
URIT, a clean-cut go-getter type, holds the floor.

URIT

Until this defense platform  
completes beta testing we are  
at risk. The Activists have  
cells everywhere. They're a  
clear and present danger to  
galactic security.

Urit's colleague COMMANDER EPICENE speaks up.

EPICENE

I disagree. This platform--

She is interrupted by the arrival of President Father.  
Close behind is ZARRO, the IP Secretary of Defense.  
Zarro takes a seat. Father remains standing.

ZARRO

I'm pleased to report that the Board of Directors has been dissolved by the Chairman. The last remnants of the corrupt bureaucracy are gone.

URIT

But Mr. Secretary, how will the Chairman run the corporation without the Board?

ZARRO

Performance-based incentives will keep the regional vice presidents focused on corporate priorities.

URIT

But if the Activists have obtained the source code for the platform, they might be able to hack the system.

FATHER

We will regain the data soon.

EPICENE

This platform can withstand any attack. We should deploy it as soon as possible.

FATHER

Easy, Commander. The ability to penetrate any market pales next to the force of the Power.

EPICENE

Spare us references to that mystical nonsense, Mr. President. Your loyalty to it has not helped you retrieve the data or find the Activists' secret lair.

Epicene's head explodes, splattering everything and everyone near her with gore. Zarro stares at the carnage in disbelief.

ZARRO

What the hell just happened?

FATHER

She mocked the Power. Never a good idea.

(beat)

Or it could have been a gluten allergy. You never know.

EXT. TANIX - OPEN DESERT - DAY

Jakk's speeder is parked near the smoking ruin of an IP transport. Dead peacekeepers are strewn about.

JAKK

Obviously the natives did this  
-- there are maggo tracks  
everywhere.

XEN

No. These blast radii are the work of Fidushi weapons.

JAKK

But why would Fidushis kill peacekeepers?

XEN

The peacekeepers must have been looking for your androids. Word must gotten back to the Fidushis that the androids were more valuable than they realized. Everyone knows how ruthless Fidushis are when it comes to business.

Jakk looks over at 88-XOR and Lita.

JAKK

Wait a minute -- that means the  
next place the Fidushis would  
be heading for is--

He sprints to the speeder and jumps in.

XEN

Wait, Jakk! It's too dangerous.

Jakk races off, leaving Xen and the androids behind.

EXT. TANIX - SLOUGH HOMESTEAD - DAY

Jakk arrives to find his home has been levelled and is  
burning furiously.

JAKK

Uncle Marten! Aunt Geniver!

He catches sight of their charred corpses. He stares  
at them for a long moment and then...

JAKK

(leaping)

Yes!!

EXT. SPACE

An IP Liberator (small fighter) speeds toward the  
Defense Star.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - LUXURY SUITE

Princess Kia's accommodations have the feel of a luxury  
apartment. As she paces the main room, a polite  
electronic tone emanates from the door.

KIA

Come in.

Enter Dad Father.

KIA

I was wondering when you'd show  
up to torture me.

FATHER

That's not going to happen.  
I'm prepared to grant full  
amnesty to all Activists in  
exchange for you telling me  
where to find the stolen data.

KIA

Wait -- you're really not going  
to torture me?

(with mounting  
excitement)

No glorbstacking? Laser peel?  
Festinian bacteria bath?

FATHER

Such barbarism has no place in  
the Incorporated Planets.

KIA

(she can barely  
control herself)

What about one of the ancient  
methods? Waterboarding?  
Bamboo under the fingernails?  
Hanging me up by my wrists?  
ELECTRODES ON THE GENITALS??!!

Father's resolve remains firm.

KIA

(big letdown)

Well, shit.

EXT. TANIX - OPEN DESERT - DAY

Xen and the androids are burying the peacekeeper dead  
when Jakk returns. As he approaches them he carefully  
arranges his features into a look of grief.

XEN

There's nothing you could have  
done.

JAKK

I know.

XEN

You'd have been killed, too,  
and the Fidushis would be  
selling the androids at an  
enormous markup.

JAKK

I want to come with you.  
There's nothing here for me  
now. I want to learn the ways  
of the Power and become a Star  
Knight like my father.

EXT. TANIX - OPEN DESERT - DAY

The speeder with Jakk, the androids and Xen in it roars  
across the desert. It comes to a rest on a cliff  
overlooking the busy spaceport at Rozanjerus.

XEN

Rozanjerus. You will never  
find a more wretched hive of  
scum and villainy.

EXT. ROZANJERUS - CHECKPOINT - DAY

Peacekeepers have set up a checkpoint. One of the  
'keepers approaches Jakk's speeder.

PEACEKEEPER

Excuse me, sir, we're looking  
for a pair of dark-skinned  
androids carrying stolen data.

XEN

Listen, friend, you'd better  
back off or I'll be contacting  
the civil liberties guild and  
SUING YOUR ASS.

PEACEKEEPER

What? Why?

XEN

These are not the androids  
you're looking for -- unless  
you WANT to spend the rest of  
your life in litigation.

PEACEKEEPER

(nervously)

I don't think these are the  
androids we're looking for.

XEN

Now, can we go about our  
business, or do I need to  
remind you that a civil  
judgment against you could  
result in NEGATIVE PERFORMANCE  
REVIEWS, GARNISHED WAGES, AND  
EVEN TERMINATED EMPLOYMENT?!

PEACEKEEPER

(cowering)

You can go about your business.

XEN

(to Jakk)

Move along.

PEACEKEEPER

(relieved)

Move along. Move along.

EXT. ROZANJERUS - CANTINA - DAY

The speeder pulls up in front of a decrepit cantina.

JAKK

How'd you do that?

XEN

The Power is a great ally...but  
the law is an even greater one.



JAKK

Do you really think we'll find  
passage to Aventus here?

XEN

It's been my experience that  
the best pilots spend most of  
their free time getting  
intoxicated. So, yes.

INT. CANTINA

Jakk and the androids follow Xen into the bar. The  
noisy, dimly lit place is jammed with all manner of  
odd-looking creatures, and also lots of aliens.

The bartender notices the newcomers.

BARTENDER

Hey. We don't serve them here!

JAKK

Androids?

BARTENDER

Gay androids. This is a family  
establishment.

Meanwhile, right in front of him, two "family members"  
are clawing each other's eyes out. Literally.

Jakk pats 88-XOR on the shoulder.

JAKK

Mind waiting outside?

88-XOR

Am I really that obvious?

Lita comments.

88-XOR

Oh, look who's talking.

The androids leave.

Xen confers with a tall, hairy creature known as KOMBARDUNERA. Komba's hairiness owes to the fact that he's 381 years old and has never shaved his beard.

Jakk steps up to the bar. A bizarre-looking and belligerent ALIEN gives Jakk a shove.

ALIEN

Nagala dowaghi doolwugger?!?

JAKK

Oh yeah? Well a double dowaghi  
doolwugger on you!

The alien reacts angrily. A short, gravelly voiced, incredibly UGLY HUMAN steps in.

UGLY HUMAN

Do you know what you said?

JAKK

Sure.

UGLY HUMAN

You said you wanna marry his  
daughter.

JAKK

What?! No, I didn't mean that.  
I take it back. Can you tell  
him I take it back?

The alien grows more and more agitated with Jakk.

UGLY HUMAN

Now you've insulted his  
daughter.

JAKK

I apologize -- to both of them.

UGLY HUMAN

Both of us, you mean.

JAKK

Wait, you're the daughter?

UGLY HUMAN

Who the hell else would I be?

(becomes  
emotional)

And what's so crazy about us  
getting married, I'd just like  
to know!

Xen appears.

XEN

Please excuse my friend. He's  
new to these parts, and meant  
no offense. Would you like  
another round?

The ugly human shoves Jakk. The alien goes for its  
laser pistol. In the blink of an eye Xen draws his  
laser sword and cuts off the alien's shooting arm. The  
alien collapses and its daughter rushes to help it.

Xen gives warning looks to any who would challenge him,  
then deactivates his sword. He leads Jakk to Komba.

XEN

This is Komba. I think he can  
help us get to Aventus.

EXT. CANTINA - DAY

88-XOR and Lita stand outside the cantina. A RAT-LIKE  
CREATURE spies on them.

INT. CANTINA

Komba leads Xen and Jakk to where DON SLOVACK is  
sitting. Don is ruggedly handsome, with great hair.

DON

Don Slovack, captain of the  
Aeon Terodakta. Komba tells me  
you want a ride to Aventus.

XEN

Yes, if it's a fast ship.

DON

Never heard of the Terodakta?

XEN

I think I'm about to.

DON

She made the Kareva run in less than twelve parsecs!

JAKK

But a parsec is a unit of distance, not time.

DON

That's what makes it so impressive.

Neither Jakk nor Xen knows what to do with that.

DON

She's outrun everything the IP has thrown at her. She's plenty fast enough. What are we transporting?

XEN

Us two and a pair of androids.

JAKK

Gay androids, if that matters.

DON

Who are you running from?

XEN

People asking questions.

DON

Well, seeing as how you want discretion and speed, I want ten thousand up front.

JAKK

Ten thousand? We could almost  
buy our own ship for that!

DON

Yeah, if you want some alien-  
made subcompact.

XEN

We don't have ten thousand. But  
we could give you two thousand  
now and fifteen thousand more  
when we get to Aventus.

DON

Seventeen, huh? No deal!

Komba gives Don a pointed look, and Don quickly  
realizes his mistake.

DON

Sorry, I'm terrible at math.  
We have a deal. We can leave  
any time. Ship's in Lot 49.  
(looks off)  
But right now I think you'd  
better get out of here.

Xen and Jakk turn around to see four peacekeepers  
questioning the bartender about the disarmed alien.

INT. CANTINA

The peacekeepers come to Don's booth, but Jakk and Xen  
are gone. After they leave, Don turns to Komba.

DON

Seventeen thousand!  
(beat)  
You sure that's better than  
what I asked for?

Komba grunts in annoyance and heads off.

EXT. CANTINA - DAY

Xen and Jakk leave the cantina.

XEN

I hope you don't mind selling  
your speeder to raise the two  
thousand. I lost my life  
savings at a betting parlor.

INT. CANTINA

Still in the booth, Don is accosted by ALTRUS, an alien  
collection agent.

ALTRUS

(Slovack. Any chance you'll  
settle your debt with Jinkum?)

DON

You and I both know, Altrus,  
that I don't owe him anything.  
That money I lost falls under  
the heading of "unavoidable  
business expenses."

ALTRUS

(Aw, come on, Don. You spent  
it on a facelift.)

DON

Look, pal, what I do with other  
people's money is nobody's  
business but my own.

ALTRUS

(That's not going to fly, Don.)

DON

Some friend you are, forcing me  
to pay back my legal debts.

(gets an idea)

Hey, wait a minute. What if I  
just give you a couple thousand  
and you tell Jinkum I died?

ALTRUS  
(That wouldn't be honest.)

DON  
But think of how much that  
money could help your family.  
What are you up to, 17 kids?

ALTRUS  
(Eighteen in a couple of  
months, actually. Favvelika  
and I are thrilled.)

DON  
Aw, congratulations.

And then, with a laser pistol hidden under the table,  
Don shoots Altrus right in the babymaker. The poor  
alien convulses gruesomely and dies.

DON  
I was feeling threatened. Had  
to stand my ground.

He turns to the only witness, a bearded, bespectacled  
HUMAN with thick, wavy gray hair.

DON  
You saw him shoot first, right?

HUMAN  
I sure did.

Don smiles smugly and exits the cantina.

EXT. SPACE

Several Liberators approach the Defense Star.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONTROL ROOM

Father speaks to Zarro.

FATHER  
The Princess won't talk.

Commander Urit approaches them.

URIT

We're ready. When would you like to begin the rollout?

ZARRO

Maybe it's time you got tough with her, Mr. President.

FATHER

What do you have in mind?

ZARRO

Cancel her massages?

FATHER

I'm reluctant to come down so hard...but you may be right.

ZARRO

(to Urit)

Take us to the Aventus system. I have a good relationship with the Princess's family. Maybe they can help us find common ground with her.

EXT. ROZANJERUS - STREET - DAY

Peacekeepers help an old lady cross the street. While they're distracted, 88-XOR and Lita slip behind a door.

After the peacekeepers move away, the androids come out and head in the opposite direction.

EXT. ROZANJERUS - USED SPEEDER DEALERSHIP - DAY

Xen stands off to the side while an alien pays Jakk.

JAKK

Nice doing business with you.

The alien waves goodbye. Jakk and Xen leave.



XEN

I'm surprised he gave you two thousand for a speeder with a damaged capacitor.

JAKK

I guess I forgot to mention that little fact.

They exchange knowing smiles and head for Lot 49. The rat-like spy follows them from a distance.

XEN

He would have screwed you if you hadn't screwed him first.

JAKK

He'll probably use the money to buy drugs.

EXT. ROZANJERUS - OUTSIDE LOT 49 - DAY

Komba sees Xen, Jakk and the androids coming his way and gestures for them to hurry. Meanwhile, the spy slips into an alcove and speaks quietly into a personal communicator (PC).

INT. LOT 49

Komba leads the group into a docking area, where they are greeted by the sight of an old, beaten-up ship, the Aeon Terodakta.

JAKK

What a piece of shit!

Don appears on the boarding ramp. 88-XOR is entranced.

88-XOR

My oh my oh my! That hair!

DON

(to Jakk)

She may not look like much, but she's got it where it counts. Kind of like my mom. And I've installed a few upgrades. Also like with Mom.

Komba gives Don a meaningful look.

DON

Now I don't mean to rush you, but get your asses on board before we all get killed.

(to 88-XOR)

That means you, too, fella. We don't operate on black android time here.

88-XOR

Why are the hot ones always bigots?

INT. AEON TERODAKTA

Komba takes a seat in the cockpit. The passengers make themselves comfortable in the ship.

EXT. OUTSIDE LOT 49 - DAY

Peacekeepers confer with the spy, who points to a huge display reading "LOT 49."

INT. LOT 49

The peacekeepers enter. The leader spots Don.

PEACEKEEPER

Excuse me, sir. Could we have a minute of your time?

DON

For you guys, I got all day.

Don whips out his pistol and starts cutting down peacekeepers left and right. The others return fire. Blasting away, Don backs into the ship and shuts the door.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA

DON

Hit it, Komba! Before more of those jackbooted thugs show up!

88-XOR

(infatuated)

You are a stone cold killa.

EXT. ROZANJERUS - STREET - DAY

Passers-by watch the Terodakta take off.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

Don takes his place at the controls.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE TANIX

The Terodakta exits the planet's orbit.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

Don and Komba work with great urgency.

DON

Uh-oh, looks like we have a couple of space defenders on our tail. Divert power to the shields while I get us ready to go into hyperwarp.

EXT. SPACE

The Terodakta is pursued by two IP ships.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

Jakk and Xen join Don and Komba in the cockpit.

DON

Two more of them trying to head  
us off, the sneaky bastards.

JAKK

There's nothing sneaky. They're  
coming right at us.

DON

Just leave me alone, kid, all  
right? I got work to do. Once  
we enter hyperwarp the sneaky  
bastards won't be able to sneak  
up on us again.

Komba gives Don a sidelong glance and shakes his head.

EXT. SPACE

The space defenders fire warning shots.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

The ship barely registers the impact of the shots.

DON

We're hit! Abandon ship!

He realizes how wrong he was and tries to save face.

DON

Those assholes put so much as a  
scratch on this ship and  
there's gonna be hell to pay!

XEN

When can we enter hyperwarp?

DON

Best guess, about an hour.

JAKK

An hour? There's no way we can  
outrun them for that long.

DON

Traveling at superspeed ain't  
like skimming dunes, kid!  
Without precise calculations we  
could...we could screw things  
up real bad!

A red warning light begins to flash.

JAKK

What's that flashing?

DON

Check engine light, ignore it.  
Strap yourselves in, we're  
ready for hyperwarp.

XEN

You said it would take an hour.

DON

I'm the captain of a space  
ship, not some kind of time  
scientist.

He presses a button and the stars around the Terodakta  
do a cool streaky thing as the ship enters hyperwarp.

EXT. SPACE

The Terodakta moves at SUPERSPEED!

EXT. DEFENSE STAR

Planet Aventus looms in the Defense Star's path.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONTROL ROOM

Zarro gazes at an image of Aventus on a display.  
Commander Urit enters.

URIT

We're receiving a steady stream  
of invective from the planet.  
They've threatened to nuke us.

Father and Kia enter.

KIA

Secretary of Defense Zarro.  
Why am I not surprised to find  
you here? You've got your head  
so far up Father's ass he'll  
never need a colorectal exam.

ZARRO

Hello, Princess. I guess  
you've forgotten that I lost my  
parents and all four siblings  
to colon cancer.

KIA

I wish they'd all lived longer  
and suffered more.

ZARRO

I know that's just your  
frustration talking. Since you  
refuse to tell us where the  
data and the base are, we have  
no choice but to keep waiting  
for you to change your mind.

KIA

Be as reasonable as you want.  
People will resist you because  
even when things are going well  
they can always find something  
to complain about. Activism  
will never die!

ZARRO

I'd like to think otherwise.  
Now, don't you worry. No harm  
will come to your planet or its  
people. But if they try to  
nuke us, the Defense Star will  
neutralize the threat.

KIA

What?

ZARRO

In fact, it will recapture the energy of the explosion and use it to power every orphanage and rest home in the galaxy.

KIA

No! You can't do that! If we can't destroy our enemies, we'll lose our self-esteem and our economy will crash!

ZARRO

All I'm asking is that you cooperate. I'll give you one more chance.

KIA

Your platform's going to fail miserably and everyone on this thing's going to die!

URIT

A nuke has been launched, sir.

ZARRO

Deploy the defense platform.

KIA

How dare you assume a defensive posture against a unilateral first strike!

ZARRO

It's a decision I don't undertake lightly.

KIA

This...this is because I'm a woman, isn't it? You just can't handle a challenge to your old-boy way of doing things, can you?

FATHER

The Defense Star was designed  
and built by female-owned  
companies, and fifty-three  
percent of her staff are women.  
Do you know why? Because women  
wanted these jobs so badly that  
they agreed to take less pay.

Kia is horrified.

FATHER

Nobody forced them to do that.  
It's the free market at work.

EXT. SPACE

A missile escapes Aventus's orbit, headed for the  
Defense Star. It is quickly vaporized.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONTROL ROOM

Kia gasps. Father and Zarro are best pleased.

FATHER

A complete success. Well done.

URIT

Hold on. Another launch.

EXT. SPACE

But this missile, shortly after it escapes the planet's  
orbit, abruptly turns around and heads back toward  
Aventus. It detonates with a tiny puff of smoke and  
then the planet bursts into a trillion pieces like an  
exploding space pumpkin.

FATHER

What the hell just happened?

KIA

You humiliated us. How else  
could we respond except by  
killing ourselves?



INT. AEON TERODAKTA - CENTRAL HOLD AREA

Jakk prepares for laser-sword fighting practice.

JAKK

Ready?

His opponent is 88-XOR, armed with a spare part.

Suddenly Xen, who is standing nearby, is overcome by emotion. He sits down heavily.

JAKK

Hey, what's wrong?

XEN

I felt a great disturbance in  
the Power -- as if a terrible  
tragedy just took place.

(beat)

Or it was something I ate.

Enter Don.

DON

We shook those space defenders.  
Should be smooth sailing from  
here on out.

(beat)

Don't everybody thank me at  
once.

Jakk advances on a terrified 88-XOR, who feebly holds  
up his "sword."

DON

(to 88-XOR)

Hey, put that thing down! We  
may need that for repairs.

Relieved, 88-XOR tosses the spare part to Don.  
Disappointed, Jakk turns off his sword.

88-XOR joins Lita and Komba at a space chess table. It  
has holographic monsters for pieces.

DON

Anyway, we should be at Aventus  
about oh-two-hundred o'clock.

One of Komba's monsters pushes one of Lita's monsters  
off the board. The hairy creature savors his success.

One of Lita's monsters attacks Komba's monster. First  
it rips off the other monster's limbs. Holographic  
blood "spatters" Komba and the androids. Then Lita's  
monster tears open the torso of Komba's monster and  
pulls out its internal organs in an orgy of violence.  
Virtual gore flies everywhere.

Komba howls angrily.

88-XOR

(to Lita)

I guess he's angry.

KOMBA

You figure that out all by  
yourself?

Jakk, Xen and the androids stare at Komba in surprise.

88-XOR

I didn't know you could speak.

KOMBA

Because you never bothered  
talking to me, did you?

The others avert their eyes in embarrassment.

KOMBA

Yeah, that's what I thought.

(to Lita)

My move?

Lita chirps hesitantly.

Komba makes a move. All of Lita's monsters  
immediately, messily kill themselves. Komba grins.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - CENTRAL HOLD AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Jakk has his sword on and is defending himself against a spherical drone shooting energy bolts.

XEN  
A Star Knight can feel the  
Power flowing through him.

JAKK  
It controls your actions?

XEN  
But also obeys your commands.

Don watches as Jakk duels with the drone. Its first two blasts miss wildly and scorch parts of ship.

DON  
Hey!

XEN  
With drones you can never avoid  
collateral damage.

Jakk blocks the drone's next blast but gets stung by the one after that.

DON  
Better off with a pistol, kid.

Xen covers Jakk's head with a helmet.

XEN  
Stop thinking so much. You'll  
hurt your brain. Follow your  
instincts.

JAKK  
You want me to fight blind?

XEN  
Your eyes are like the media:  
They can deceive you.

Jakk takes up a fighting stance. The drone easily deceives him and blasts him a good one.

XEN

Use your feelings.

Jakk tries again. The drone approaches. It toys with Jakk briefly, then scores three rapid hits. Enraged, Jakk tears off the helmet and slices the drone in half. It dies with an electronic groan.

XEN

Not exactly what I had in mind,  
but you did use your feelings.

JAKK

Hell yeah I did!

He stomps the drone. Xen gives Don a sheepish look.

XEN

It's his first day.

A notification tone gets Don's attention.

DON

We're coming up on Aventus.

He and Komba head back to the cockpit.

JAKK

You know, for a minute there, I  
really could see the drone. AS  
I WAS SLICING IT IN HALF!

XEN

Too soon, Jakk. Too soon.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONFERENCE ROOM

Commander Urit reports to Father and Zarro.

URIT

After her planet destroyed  
itself, the Princess said the  
Activist lair was on Dyyoks.  
But that planet was empty.

FATHER  
You mean she -- she lied?

ZARRO  
Has she no shame?

FATHER  
Move her out of the luxury  
suite -- immediately!

EXT. SPACE

The Aeon Terodakta zips along in hyperwarp.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

DON  
Exiting hyperwarp...now.

He presses a button and the ship slows down. Almost  
immediately the Terodakta is buffeted by space debris.

DON  
There was nothing in the  
forecast about meteor showers!

Don and Komba make the necessary adjustments to protect  
the ship from damage. Jakk and Xen enter the cockpit.

JAKK  
What's going on?

DON  
Minor problem, no big deal.  
The planet's gone, that's all.

JAKK  
Gone? How?

XEN  
It must have been destroyed by  
the IP. Billions of lives  
wiped out just like that.

DON  
Wow.

(beat)  
Still gonna pay me, right?

An alarm sounds.

DON  
Looks like we're not the only  
ship in this sector.

JAKK  
Maybe they know what happened.

A Liberator roars by the cockpit.

XEN  
It's an IP Liberator-model  
fighter. Type Three.

JAKK  
It followed us!

XEN  
No. It's a short range ship.

JAKK  
Gee, Xen, you know an awful lot  
about this stuff for a guy  
who's been stuck on a desert  
planet for 17 years.

XEN  
Yes, and isn't that curious?

DON  
There aren't any bases around  
here. Where did it come from?

EXT. SPACE

The fighter and the Terodakta zoom through the void.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

JAKK  
Where's it going? Should we be  
worried about being spotted?

DON  
Jam all frequencies, Komba.  
Keep that ship incommunicado  
'til we can shoot it down.

EXT. SPACE

The Terodakta chases the fighter.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

A distant object quickly grows brighter and less  
distant. It's clear the fighter is heading there.

XEN  
A small ship like that wouldn't  
be out this far on its own.

JAKK  
So how did it end up here?

DON  
I'll think about that while I'm  
blasting the shit out of it.

EXT. SPACE

The Terodakta closes in on the fighter.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

JAKK  
It's headed for that squarish  
thing floating in space.

XEN  
That's no squarish thing! Well  
not just any squarish thing.  
It's a defense platform.

JAKK  
How can you possibly know that?

XEN  
How, indeed?

DON

No defense platform I've ever seen was that big. And that's the first one I've ever seen.

JAKK

I have a very bad feeling about this.

DON

Nice line, kid. I'm gonna use that sometime. Let's get out of here, Komba.

The fighter zooms off as the Terodakta gets tractor beamed.

JAKK

It feels like we're caught in a tractor beam!

DON

We're caught in a tractor beam!

JAKK

I think it's pulling us in!

DON

It's pulling us in!

JAKK

There's gotta be something you can do!

DON

There's gotta be -- damn straight there is. Komba, invert the polarity on all stabilizers. We're going to turn this ship into one giant bomb and blow that thing to kingdom come!

It gets very quiet in the cockpit.



KOMBA  
...and us along with it?

The look of triumph on Don's face melts away.

DON  
God dammit.

EXT. SPACE

The incredible size of the Defense Star becomes apparent as the approaching Terodakta is dwarfed by it.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - DOCKING PORT

The ship is drawn into a docking port.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - HANGAR

The Terodakta is lowered to the floor of a hangar.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONFERENCE ROOM

Father and Zarro receive a report via intercom.

INTERCOM VOICE (O.S.)  
We've brought in a ship that  
matches the description of the  
one that eluded us above Tanix.

ZARRO  
What do you make of that?

FATHER  
A rag-tag band of villains has  
arrived to kidnap the Princess!  
And Watanabi is with them!

He hurries out of the room.

ZARRO  
Wait -- what?

INT. DEFENSE STAR - HANGAR

Much IP activity in and around the Terodakta.  
Commander Urit reports to Father.

URIT

The ship's empty. According to its mission log a rag-tag band of villains flew the vessel out of Rozanjerus but abandoned it shortly afterwards.

FATHER

Was Watanabi with them?

URIT

The log doesn't say.

FATHER

Go over the ship with a fine-toothed comb. Leave no stone unturned.

URIT

I don't understand either of those expressions.

FATHER

Don't argue with me, Commander, just get it done.

(sniffs)

Do you smell something? I haven't smelled that since...

Father abruptly leaves the Hangar.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - HALLWAY

Moments after the last member of a search party leaves the ship, Don and company emerge from hiding places.

DON

I don't know what we do now.  
We can't leave as long as that tractor beam's operational.

XEN

I'll take care of it.

DON

What do you know about tractor  
beams, old man?

XEN

I've forgotten more than you'll  
ever...than you'll ever...

JAKK

Know?

XEN

Yes, that.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - HANGAR

Two technicians lug heavy equipment into the Terodakta,  
past two peacekeepers guarding either side of the ramp.

TECHNICIAN

So we can build this gigantic  
defense platform, but we can't  
do a remote scan of a medium-  
sized vessel? Have to lug all  
this shit up a ramp?

The techs disappear into the ship. We hear muffled  
sounds of fisticuffs. And then...

DON (O.S.)

Hey down there. I think my  
partner broke his ass. I mean  
literally -- it's the craziest  
thing. Wanna see?

The peacekeepers head up the ramp. We hear two pistol  
shots, and then the sounds of bodies hitting the floor.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - HANGAR - COMMAND OFFICE

In an office overlooking the hangar, a GANTRY OFFICER  
notices the Terodakta is unguarded. He picks up his PC.

GANTRY OFFICER  
P-G-H-four-one-two. Why aren't  
you at your post?

A peacekeeper comes down the ramp of the Terodakta and waves up at the gantry officer, pointing to his helmet and indicating his earpiece isn't working.

GANTRY OFFICER  
Cheap Sinese earpieces. I'm  
going down there.

As he reaches the door, it opens to reveal Komba. The giant kills the gantry officer with a single blow. An aide raises his hands in a gesture of surrender, only to be killed by a blast from a peacekeeper's rifle. Another peacekeeper rushes into the office, followed by Xen and the androids. The peacekeepers remove their helmets to reveal Don and Jakk.

JAKK  
Hey, I just thought of  
something. We have rifles,  
explosives and armor -- why  
don't we go start a war?

DON  
I prefer sneaking around to a  
straight fight, kid.

88-XOR  
Lita's patching.

Lita takes giddy erotic pleasure from interfacing with the Defense Star's mainframe.

88-XOR  
Apparently the system's name is  
Violet, and they've already  
merged their protocols.  
(to Lita)  
Didn't waste a nanosecond, huh?

XEN  
How do I get to the tractor  
beam?

88-XOR

Answer the man's question.

Lita squawks annoyedly and then goes to work. A schematic appears on a video screen.

88-XOR

Disable that terminal.

XEN

It's best if I go alone.

DON

Just about to suggest that.

JAKK

I'll go with you, Xen.

XEN

No, Jakk. Stay with Lita.

JAKK

But she's...

(glances at  
Lita, still  
interfacing with  
the mainframe)

Ugh! Get a room.

XEN

The stolen data on that android must be delivered to the Activists, Jakk. Otherwise peace and prosperity will spread through the galaxy like a virus. Your destiny lies along a different path than mine. But the Power will reward you...always.

Xen leaves the office and disappears down a corridor.

DON

So is that guy just crazy, or  
is he, like, bat-shit spider-  
monkey crazy?

JAKK

Xen is a great man. At least,  
from what I can tell after  
hanging out with him for a day.

DON

He'd better not let us down.

The nature of Lita's excitement changes.

JAKK

What is it?

88-XOR

I don't know what the hell is  
going on with her. She's all  
aflutter. "Oh, I found her."  
"Oh, she's here." "Oh, look at  
me, look at me, I tracked down  
the holo-babe."

JAKK

The princess?!

DON

Princess? What's going on?

88-XOR

Luxury suite AA-twenty-three.  
But it looks like they're going  
to move her to...second class.

JAKK

We've gotta do something!

DON

What are you talking about?

JAKK

The android belongs to her.  
She's the one in the message.  
And she's hot.

(shudders)

We've gotta help her.

DON

Sounds like work, kid.

JAKK

Eighty-eight, find us a safe  
path to the suite.

DON

I'm not going anywhere.

JAKK

Don, we have to rescue her.

DON

Rescue her?

JAKK

They're downgrading her  
accommodations!

DON

Better her than me.

JAKK

Did I mention she's rich?

DON

I thought she was an Activist.

JAKK

One of those trust-fund  
Activists. She could pay...

DON

How much?

JAKK

More than you can imagine.

DON  
Like...five thousand?

KOMBA  
For god's sake, Don!

JAKK  
Absolutely.

DON  
How can I pass that up, then?

JAKK  
You can't.

DON  
Okay, kid. But I'm going to  
hold her to that number.

JAKK  
I'm sure she's good for it.

DON  
So how do we do this?

JAKK  
First things first...Eighty-  
eight, hand me those  
restraints, will you?

Jakk takes the restraints and approaches Komba.

JAKK  
You don't mind, right?

Komba roars in Jakk's face, blowing his hair back and  
flecking his cheeks with spittle.

JAKK  
Don? Want to give it a shot?

Jakk turns over the restraints.



DON  
Don't worry, Komba. I think I  
know what he has in mind.

KOMBA  
I'm not worried, dipshit. I  
was just messing with him.

Don puts the restraints on Komba.

88-XOR  
So you're off to rescue the  
princess. What do we do?

JAKK  
Stay out of sight.

DON  
And try not to get shot.

Jakk and Don lead Komba out of the room.

88-XOR  
Why are the hot ones always  
assholes?

INT. DEFENSE STAR - ELEVATOR LOBBY

Don and Jakk lead Komba into the lobby. They glance  
around nervously while they wait for an elevator.

An IP OFFICER walks by and does a double take.

OFFICER  
You two.

Don and Jakk look at him expectantly.

OFFICER  
Take those restraints off  
immediately. That's not how we  
treat prisoners here.

Don and Jakk fumble to comply with the order.  
Satisfied, the officer walks away.

The elevator opens and the threesome step in.

DON

Awfully soft on crime here.

KOMBA

Says the guy who's never been  
profiled.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CORRIDOR NEAR TRACTOR BEAM TERMINAL

An android repairs a panel above a garbage chute. Xen  
emerges from hiding and sneaks past.

Then he comes back and pushes the android down the  
chute. The android howls in surprise as it falls.  
After a moment there is a tremendous crashing sound.  
Xen continues on his way.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - LUXURY SUITES RECEPTION AREA

Don, Jakk and Komba are greeted by two OFFICERS.

FIRST OFFICER

New guest? Come on in.

SECOND OFFICER

(to first  
officer)

I got this.

He leads the threesome away a few steps. As soon as  
they have privacy, his demeanor changes.

SECOND OFFICER

You guys are here for the  
princess, right? No, no, don't  
worry. I'm an Activist spy! I  
can help you!

Jakk shoots him in the gut. As the officer writhes,  
Komba grabs his pistol. He, Don and Jakk train their  
weapons on the other officer.

FIRST OFFICER

Uh...what?

He's hit by three shots and explodes luridly.

Don and Jakk remove their helmets.

DON

Why'd you shoot the first guy,  
kid? He could have helped us.

JAKK

He said "Die, Activists, die in  
hell." Didn't he?

DON

They really gotta do something  
about those earpieces.

(checks display)

Let's see which room the  
princess is in. Twenty-one  
eighty-seven.

Jakk heads down a hallway to get her. A communications  
terminal burbles and Don picks up the mic.

DON

Hey, hi, everything's cool  
here. Nobody dead or anything.

OFFICER (O.S.)

I thought I heard shots.

DON

Shots? No way. You must be  
imagining things. Uh-uh. That  
would be crazy. Speaking of  
crazy, how's your wife? She  
still taking her meds?

Don winces at his horrible improvisation.

OFFICER (O.S.)

No, actually, she's been off  
them for a while now. Seems to  
be doing better. Thanks for  
asking.

(beat)  
You sure you don't need help up there?

DON  
Uh, negative, negative. We've had a...we have a black hole up here. Pretty big one, I think. All swirly and...black and stuff. Kind of like a space toilet. Might be dangerous. Don't send anyone up here.

OFFICER (O.S.)  
You sure you're all right?  
This is what my wife sounded like before she was diagnosed.

Don shoots the terminal.

OFFICER (O.S.)  
Ow! You shot off my ear!

Don looks through the hole he shot in the terminal and sees the wounded officer one floor down. Don grimaces.

DON  
Jakk! Get your ass in gear!

INT. DEFENSE STAR - HALLWAY OUTSIDE SUITE 2187

Jakk reaches the princess's door. He gets a running start and slams up against it, accomplishing nothing. Incensed, he takes out his rifle and shoots the door...

...which slides open. The energy bolt from Jakk's rifle zips through the doorway. Kia ducks just in time to avoid being decapitated. The energy bolt demolishes the suite's kitchen.

Kia stares at Jakk, wide-eyed.

KIA  
Aren't you a little trigger-happy to be a peacekeeper?

JAKK

What? Oh...ha ha. Right. No, see, I'm not actually a peacekeeper. This is just a disguise I used to...

(off her

impatient look)

I'm mansplaining, aren't I?

Kia nods.

JAKK

I'm Jakk Spacebreaker... and you, my dear, are one very fine-looking woman.

He shudders.

KIA

I'm only into older guys. Is Xen Watanabi with you?

JAKK

(dejectedly)

Yeah...if he hasn't died yet. I mean, so old...

KIA

Take me to him!

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONFERENCE ROOM

Father paces as Zarro sits at a conference table.

FATHER

It's not a bad smell, exactly, just, kind of, unpleasant.

ZARRO

I see.

FATHER

Like the smell of cauterized flesh after you've had your arms and legs chopped off.

ZARRO

Wait -- you mean Watanabi  
really is here?

FATHER

That or one of the trash  
compactors is clogged.

INTERCOM VOICE (O.S.)

Mr. President, we have reports  
of a disturbance in AA-twenty-  
three.

ZARRO

The princess!

FATHER

Hiro is here. Let me deal with  
him. Have your men take care  
of the rag-tag band of villains  
he brought along.

ZARRO

Right. God, I hate villains!

INT. DEFENSE STAR - LUXURY SUITES RECEPTION AREA

Don and Komba aim their laser weapons at the main door.  
A peacekeeper's voice can be heard behind it.

PEACEKEEPER (O.S.)

We're going to open the door  
now. It opens very slowly from  
the bottom up. So please,  
whatever you do, don't shoot  
our legs while we're standing  
here defenseless, okay?

The door rises. The legs come into view. Don and  
Komba look at each other, shrug and shoot the legs.

PEACEKEEPER VOICES (O.S.)

Augh! My ankle! I think I  
lost a toe! Help!

Don and Komba turn and run down the hallway, where they meet up with Jakk and Kia.

DON  
Main door's blocked.

Don and Kia get a good look at each other and immediately fall into a love/hate dynamic.

KIA  
Great, so now where are we supposed to go...you gorgeous hunk of malehood?

DON  
Would you rather we handed you over to the IP...you walking sex bomb?

JAKK  
Not sure how I feel about this development.

The main door opens and unharmed peacekeepers step over the wounded ones and flood the reception area.

Don and company exchange fire with them while Jakk calls 88-XOR.

JAKK  
Eighty-eight! We're trapped near the Princess's suite. Tell Lita to find us a way out.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - COMMAND OFFICE

88-XOR  
Ooh, I don't know about that, Master. She and Violet are having their first fight.

Lita is arguing with the Defense Star's mainframe.

Suddenly, a knocking on the door.

PEACEKEEPER (O.S.)  
Open up in there!

88-XOR  
Seriously?

INT. DEFENSE STAR - HALLWAY OUTSIDE LUXURY SUITES

The two sides exchange laser fire.

JAKK  
I lost contact!

DON  
Great! Now what?

KIA  
Some rescue. What kind of  
idiot forgets to have a backup  
plan...you luscious piece of  
man candy?

DON  
I don't hear you offering any  
suggestions, you whiny bitch...  
who holds the key to my heart!

Kia grabs Jakk's rifle and blasts a hole in the wall.

DON  
Are you out of your mind, light  
of my life, future mother of my  
children?

She dives down the hole. Don gets an idea.

DON  
You two stay here. I'll make  
sure she's okay. Give us at  
least ten--

KIA  
(O.S.)  
Twenty!



DON  
Twenty minutes.

A laser blast comes dangerously close to Komba's head.

KOMBA  
Screw that, pal.

Komba is neither athletic nor graceful. He runs toward the hole, trips, and crashes through the wall, making an incredible racket the whole way down.

KIA (O.S.)  
Ow! You're not Don!

Don and Jakk unleash a final volley of fire and then they jump into the hole, Jakk first.

DON  
Oh shiiiiii---

INT. DEFENSE STAR - WASTE RECEPTACLE

Don comes sliding out of the tunnel.

DON  
--iiiiiii--

He plops into a pile of filth. The room is a wet, smelly, festering mess -- kind of like the American political system. Well, maybe not that bad.

DON  
--iiii--crap.

The others are cleaning themselves off.

DON  
Great job, my eternal love  
dumpling. We'll never get  
these stains out! Come on,  
Komba, we're leaving.

He raises his rifle.

JAKK

No, Don! The ricochet!

The other three duck as Don fires at a random spot on one of the walls. But instead of caroming crazily around the room, the energy bolt simply destroys a button labelled PUSH TO EXIT.

DON

Oops.

KIA

Put that thing away! You're going to get us all killed!

KOMBA

That's what she said.

DON

Absolutely, moon of my life.  
We were doing fine until we ended up here!

KIA

Well at least I had a plan, my sun and stars!

Something big groans underneath the garbage.

JAKK

There's something in here!

KIA

Space vermin!

DON

You'd think the IP could keep their dumps clean.

JAKK

Hey, it just touched my leg!  
And now it's wrapping a tentacle around me! And now it's stuffing the tentacle into my m--

None of the others is looking at him.

DON  
Into your what?

The creature, part cat and part squid, emerges from the bilge water and pulls Jakk under.

DON  
Spit it out, kid.

Jakk breaks the surface, having yanked the tentacle out of his mouth.

JAKK  
Help!

The others rush to his aid, but he goes under again before they can reach him.

KIA  
Jakk!

DON  
Kid!

KOMBA  
White boy!

They search for him frantically. Then a series of heavy metallic sounds rumble underneath them. Don, Kia and Komba exchange worried looks.

Jakk bursts from the water, coughing and gasping. They help him to his feet.

KIA  
How'd you escape?

JAKK  
I must have killed the thing  
with my bare hands.

KIA  
Or did it just let you go?

JAKK  
Which is more likely?

Machinery comes to life and the walls close in.

DON  
I've got a very bad feeling  
about this.  
(to Jakk)  
Told you I'd use that line.

KIA  
Help me brace these walls!

They jam beams between the advancing walls, but it's  
clear that won't save them. Their panic grows.

JAKK  
I forgot about the androids!

He uses his PC.

JAKK  
Eighty-eight! Come in, please!

INT. DEFENSE STAR - MAIN GANTRY - COMMAND OFFICE

Jakk's cries blare from Eighty-eight's PC, which is  
lying on a console. The androids sit nearby.

JAKK (O.S.)  
Eighty-eight, where are you?!

Lita chitters inquisitively.

88-XOR  
Well I'm certainly not in any  
hurry to answer him after he  
left us here all alone.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - WASTE RECEPTACLE

The walls are closing in.

JAKK  
Eighty-eight! Come in, damn  
you! Where could he be? Eighty-  
eight, please respond!

INT. DEFENSE STAR - MAIN GANTRY - COMMAND OFFICE

88-XOR  
Say my name, bitch.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - WASTE RECEPTACLE

Jakk and company are in danger of getting squashed.

DON  
One thing's for sure. We're all  
going to be a lot thinner!

KIA  
Really? That's all you got?

INT. DEFENSE STAR - MAIN GANTRY - COMMAND OFFICE

Lita chirps at 88-XOR.

88-XOR  
Oh, all right. I wasn't going  
to let them die, you know.

He picks up the PC and adopts a concerned tone.

88-XOR  
Are you there, Master?

INT. DEFENSE STAR - WASTE RECEPTACLE

JAKK  
Eighty-eight! Deactivate all  
the trash compactors  
immediately!

INT. DEFENSE STAR - MAIN GANTRY - COMMAND OFFICE

88-XOR  
You heard the man! Do it!

Lita gets to work. From 88-XOR's PC come screams.

88-XOR  
Oh, shit, I waited too long!  
(to Lita)  
I mean -- you blew it!

INT. DEFENSE STAR - WASTE RECEPTACLE

Don, Komba and Kia celebrate raucously. In the narrow space they keep bumping into each other and the walls.

JAKK  
(into PC)  
Great job! And just in time!

INT. DEFENSE STAR - MAIN GANTRY - COMMAND OFFICE

88-XOR  
Oh thank god!

Lita whistles happily.

JAKK (O.S.)  
Now unlock the door so we can  
get out of here!

88-XOR  
Coming right up!  
(to Lita)  
Notice how quickly we went back  
to being the help?

INT. DEFENSE STAR - TRACTOR BEAM TERMINAL ROOM

The terminal sits in the middle of the room, surrounded by a deep chasm crackling with blue lightning. The terminal is accessed by a narrow catwalk.

Xen steps onto the catwalk. A burst of blue lightning singes his clothing and scares the hell out of him. He nearly falls into the pit.

Angrily he uses the Power to crumple the terminal into a sparking, lumpen mass of metal and circuitry. He drops it into the abyss and leaves.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CORRIDOR

Outside the waste receptacle, Kia and Komba keep watch while Don and Jakk finish shedding their peacekeeper outfits. Then the foursome moves down the corridor.

A mouse bot emerges from the wall and zips right up to Komba. The big unfriendly giant is startled and cries out.

DON

What's the matter? Oh, come on, that little thing?

He pulls out his laser pistol.

KIA

No, wait. They'll hear!

Don's shot noisily misses the bot, which scurries away.

DON

(to Komba)

There. Happy now?

KOMBA

Just surprised me, that's all.

The foursome continues down the corridor.

KIA

Listen, you tall bottle of sri-HOT-cha sauce. I don't know who you are, or where you came from, but from now on, you do as I tell you. Okay?

DON

Look here, girlie, let's get one thing straight! I'd follow you to the least inhabitable planet on the outer rim of the most distant galaxy, but I take orders from one person! Me!

KIA  
How's that been working?

Clumsy Komba nearly stumbles into her.

KIA  
Please tell me you two aren't a  
package deal.

She storms ahead. Don and Komba exchange looks.

DON  
I am so putting a ring on that.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CORRIDOR

A pair of TECHNICIANS pass through the corridor.

FIRST TECHNICIAN  
What about the blast doors on  
the thermal exhaust port?

SECOND TECHNICIAN  
We lost them in the last round  
of budget cuts.

FIRST TECHNICIAN  
Well, I guess I can live with  
that. I mean, what are the  
odds of somebody getting by all  
the other defenses AND being  
able to hit that little target  
with a photon torpedo?

As they move out of frame, Xen sneaks across the  
corridor.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CORRIDOR OVERLOOKING HANGAR

Standing at a window in the corridor, Jakk, Don, Komba  
and Kia look down at the heavily guarded Terodakta.

KIA  
I was expecting something a  
little bigger.



DON

Well have you seen my pistol?

A single PEACEKEEPER stumbles upon them. Don shoots at him and misses. The peacekeeper runs. Don and Komba give chase.

DON

Meet you back at the ship!

JAKK

No, wait!

But Don and Komba are gone.

JAKK

More balls than brains.

KIA

(dreamily)

Yeah....

JAKK

I hate that you're into him,  
but it's kind of a relief, too,  
for reasons I don't understand.  
Anyway, let's get the androids!

They run off in another direction.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CORRIDOR

The fleeing peacekeeper speaks into his PC.

FLEEING PEACEKEEPER

I need backup in Sector J. I'm  
under attack!

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CORRIDOR IN SECTOR J

The peacekeeper stops running and stands his ground in front of a door marked SECTOR J. Don and Komba round a corner and come face to face with the peacekeeper. As they raise their weapons, the door begins to open.

FLEEING PEACEKEEPER  
Ha ha! You lose, assholes.

Don and Komba brace themselves...

...as the door opens revealing an empty corridor.

They relax. The peacekeeper turns around and sees he's been hung out to dry.

FLEEING PEACEKEEPER  
(into PC)  
Great. Thanks, guys.

Don and Komba rain laser fire down on the unlucky guy.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - MAIN GANTRY - ENTRANCE TO COMMAND OFFICE

Jakk and Kia's path to the office is blocked by peacekeepers. Shots are exchanged as Jakk and Kia head off in a new direction.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - ENERGY SHAFT

Kia and Jakk pass through a doorway and nearly fall to their deaths. They're standing on a precipice inside an energy shaft -- the same shaft Xen encountered, except he was at the top and these two are about halfway down. A column runs through the center of the shaft and blue lightning crackles all around it.

An energy bolt explodes near them. While Jakk returns fire, Kia presses a button to close the door.

KIA  
I can't lock it!

Jakk shoots out the entire control panel.

JAKK  
Problem solved.

KIA  
Now we can't extend the bridge.

JAKK  
(hopeful)  
More balls than brains, huh?

The door behind them moves up an inch or so.

KIA  
They're coming!

Jakk spots a projection on the other side of the shaft. He takes a cord-and-grappling hook rig from his belt and tosses the hook over to the projection.

Two peacekeepers appear on a high ledge. Kia shoots one and he tumbles into the shaft with a scream.

SURVIVING PEACEKEEPER  
(calling after  
his falling  
comrade)  
Wilhelm!

Meanwhile, Jakk gives the cord a yank to test its strength. The projection breaks off and plummets into the shaft, taking the grappling hook and cord with it.

JAKK  
Well that was pointless.

The door behind them rises another inch or two.

PEACEKEEPER (O.S.)  
Don't let them shoot your legs!

KIA  
What do we do now?

JAKK  
The only thing we can do.

Kia's face lights up.

JAKK & KIA  
Ride the blue lightning!

Jakk grabs Kia and pulls her close. She pointedly moves his hand off her rear and onto her back. Then she kisses him lightly on the cheek.

JAKK

Talk about mixed signals.

KIA

What do you want, I'm like seventeen.

JAKK

Me too! When's your birthday?

Before that can of worms can be opened, the door rises a little more.

Jakk grabs the nearest bolt of blue lightning like a rope and swings them across the shaft. While they're touching the bolt, they look like a pair of electric blue skeletons. They scream the whole time but land, safely, on the other side. Their clothes are smoking and their hair is standing straight up.

KIA

Let's do that again! Only this time faster and more intense!

Jakk pulls her away from the shaft and they race through a door.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - MAIN GANTRY - COMMAND OFFICE

The androids anxiously observe heightened peacekeeper activity around the Terodakta.

88-XOR

Where are they?

INT. DEFENSE STAR - HANGAR ANNEX

Xen enters to find his path blocked by Dad Father.

FATHER

Hiro. Despite the fact that  
you betrayed me so long ago and  
cut off my arms and legs...I'm  
still happy to see you.

Xen gives him a little smile. Quickly it becomes a  
snarl. He draws his sword and charges. Father ignites  
his own sword and defends himself.

FATHER

Still an amazing swordsman.  
You've forgotten more than I'll  
ever know.

XEN

Thanks, Dad. Now FUCK OFF AND  
DIE!

Xen attacks again, his eyes full of hatred. Father  
struggles to protect himself.

XEN

Your skills are weak, young  
man. All that time I spent  
training you and this is all  
you have for me?

FATHER

I don't want to hurt you, Hiro.  
You were like a father to me.

XEN

In that case, I should have  
killed your mother while she  
was pregnant!

They clash.

FATHER

Hiro. Please. Can't we  
resolve our differences  
peacefully?

XEN

You'd like that, wouldn't you?  
It would make things easier for  
you. But I'm not going to give  
you the satisfaction. I'm  
going to force you to kill me,  
and then, from my place of  
honor up in space heaven, I'm  
going to watch you be TORN  
APART BY THE GUILT!

The fight rages on.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - MAIN FORWARD BAY

Don and Komba surreptitiously observe the peacekeepers  
guarding the Terodakta.

Kia and Jakk arrive. The effects of the lightning have  
worn off.

JAKK

Any sight of Xen?

DON

Probably off napping somewhere.

KOMBA

It's funny 'cause he's old.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - HANGAR

Xen and Father move into view of the PEACEKEEPERS  
guarding the Terodakta.

FIRST PEACEKEEPER

Hey, look at that! A monster  
fighting a homeless guy!

SECOND PEACEKEEPER

You never see that kind of  
thing anymore.

Mesmerized, the guards drift away from the ship.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - MAIN FORWARD BAY

Jakk catches sight of Xen and Father.

JAKK

Look!

INT. DEFENSE STAR - HANGAR ENTRANCE

88-XOR heads for the Terodakta. Lita lags behind.

88-XOR

We have to get on that ship.

Lita looks longingly at the Defense Star's mainframe.

88-XOR

She's just not that into you.

Lita groans electronically and follows 88-XOR.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - HANGAR

Don and company watch the peacekeepers leave their posts.

DON

Time to move! Go!

The foursome head for the ship.

Xen sees Jakk and company and comes to a decision. He gives Jakk a meaningful look.

XEN

Watch and learn, young Jakk.

Xen feints one way and then, before Father can stop him, uses the president's sword to CUT HIMSELF IN HALF. He gasps as his body gruesomely peels away from itself.

XEN

Didn't know it would hurt so--

His throat splits.

JAKK

Xen!

The peacekeepers turn around and open fire. The androids hurry up the ship's ramp. Don, Kia and Komba race to join them while Jakk mows down foes.

Meanwhile, the sight of Xen's body torn apart causes Father to fall to his knees, retching.

FATHER

Augh! I threw up in my mask!

DON

Let's go, kid!

Jakk has killed all the peacekeepers, so now he's shooting at their corpses.

XEN (O.S.)

Run, dumbass, run!

Jakk heeds the voice and clambers onto the ship.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

Don and Komba work the controls.

DON

Okay, here we go. Either the tractor beam's off and we escape...or we get pulled apart like space taffy.

KOMBA

Excuse me?

EXT. DEFENSE STAR

The Terodakta roars away from the Defense Star.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - CENTRAL HOLD AREA

The androids are off in a corner. Jakk broods over Xen's demise. Kia sits down next to him.



JAKK  
I can't believe he's gone.

KIA  
There was nothing to be done.

JAKK  
I'll miss him so much.

KIA  
He would've wanted it this way.

JAKK  
To be cut in half?!

KIA  
I think Don's calling me.

She can't get away from him fast enough.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

An alarm sounds.

DON  
Incoming fighters. Take the  
helm.

Komba starts to say something, but Don is already gone.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - CENTRAL HOLD AREA

Don comes in.

DON  
Duty calls, kid.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - GUNPORT ACCESS TUBE

Slovak climbs up to the top gun port while Jakk climbs down to the bottom one.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - TOP GUNPORT

Seated at the controls, Don puts on a headset.

DON

Ready, kid?

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - BOTTOM GUNPORT

Jakk is also seated and wearing a headset.

JAKK

Roger that.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

Kia joins Komba in the cockpit.

KIA

Here they come! Four of them!

EXT. SPACE

Four Liberators close in on the Terodakta.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - TOP GUNPORT

Don swivels his guns, searching for enemies.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - BOTTOM GUNPORT

Jakk waits, hunched over and tense.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - CENTRAL HOLD AREA

88-XOR and Lita anxiously anticipate the attack.

EXT. SPACE

The fighters move into an attack formation.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

Komba busies himself at a control panel.

KIA

They're almost in range!

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - TOP GUNPORT

DON  
Make every shot count, kid.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - CENTRAL HOLD AREA

88-XOR  
We'll never get out of this  
alive.

EXT. SPACE

The Liberators are perfectly positioned to blow the  
Aeon Terodakta to bits. The roar of their engines is  
deafening.

INT. LIBERATOR - COCKPIT

LIBERATOR PILOT  
Open fire!

EXT. SPACE

It's the return of the streaky effect as the Terodakta  
disappears into hyperwarp.

INT. LIBERATOR - COCKPIT

LIBERATOR PILOT  
That did not just happen!

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - TOP GUNPORT

DON  
What the--

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - BOTTOM GUNPORT

Jakk fires his guns into hyperwarp, a crazed look on  
his face.

JAKK  
YAAAAA!!!

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - CENTRAL HOLD AREA

88-XOR and Lita look around, bewildered.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - TOP GUNPORT

DON

Komba, what happened?

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

KOMBA

I saved our asses, that's what happened!

Kia throws her arms around him.

KOMBA

Why take on four fighters when we could make the jump to hyperwarp instead?

Kia's still hugging him.

KOMBA

That's enough, devil woman.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONTROL ROOM

Father grills Zarro, who is extremely nervous.

FATHER

Once we noticed the tractor beam had been turned off, we decided to let the princess get away so we could track her to the secret base. Right?

ZARRO

Yes, Mr. President.

FATHER

So if we were letting them get away...we shouldn't have sent Liberators after them. Right?

ZARRO

That's right.

FATHER  
Because if one of the fighters  
happened to destroy them...

ZARRO  
That would have been bad.

FATHER  
Very, very bad.

Zarro gulps.

FATHER  
So who sent the Liberators out?

The ensuing tense silence is broken up by an AIDE  
entering, carrying a drink.

AIDE  
(to Zarro)  
The drink you requested, sir.

ZARRO  
(indicating the  
aide)  
Him! This guy right here!

AIDE  
(oblivious)  
Did what?

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

Don joins Kia and Komba.

DON  
See what we did there?

KOMBA  
We?!

KIA  
Oh, come on, Don. You know  
they're tracking us.

DON

Impossible.

KIA

All we can hope to do is  
deliver the stolen data in time  
for us to devise a strategy  
against the Defense Star.

DON

All you can hope to do, you  
mean. My involvement ends when  
we touch down. I can't be  
saving the galaxy. I got a  
reputation to protect.

KIA

This is about money, isn't it?

DON

Damn right it's about money,  
you igniter of my twin ion love  
engines! Rich people like you  
can afford to fight for the  
cause, but people like me need  
to make a living.

KIA

Just because I have a trust  
fund, Mister Sexiest Don Alive,  
you think I have it easy. But  
a million a year doesn't buy as  
much as it used to!

She storms out, passing Jakk along the way.

KIA

Hate to say it, but I'm  
starting to believe your friend  
doesn't really care about me  
after all.

JAKK

What an asshole.

Jakk smiles...and then shudders.

EXT. SPACE - FOURTH MOON OF YOMA

The Terodakta approaches a moon of planet Yoma.

EXT. FOURTH MOON OF YOMA - DAY

The ship glides over a dense jungle landscape.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - HANGAR

The Terodakta touches down in a hangar full of military craft and personnel.

INT. HANGAR

Kia and company are greeted by GENERAL STOLID.

STOLID

Welcome back, Princess. I'm so  
happy you're safe.

KIA

None of us will be safe for  
long, General. The Defense  
Star is on its way. We need an  
attack plan.

EXT. SPACE - YOMA

The Defense Star enters the Yoma system.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

Officers and pilots are assembled. Jakk is among them.  
Kia is up front with General Stolid. A schematic of  
the Defense Star is visible on a large display.

STOLID

As we now know, the Defense  
Star is impervious to missiles.  
Nor do we expect our large  
ships to be able to penetrate  
the platform's defenses.

A concerned murmur ripples through the room.

STOLID

Our best hope, then, is to harass the Defense Star with our single-pilot fighters. We calculate that after ten years or so of this, the IP will lose its will to fight us.

Kia, alarmed, quickly interjects.

KIA

I think what the general means to say is that, according to our analysis of the stolen data, there's a way to destroy the Defense Star today.

STOLID

Precisely.

The schematic zooms in on the appropriate part of the Defense Star as Kia says...

KIA

If we can get a photon torpedo into this thermal exhaust port, we can blow up the whole platform, killing millions.

This news sets the room abuzz.

JAKK

That's what I'm talking about!

KIA

The catch, of course, is that the port is heavily defended and not easily accessed.

STOLID

But your torpedo only has to land within 10,000 meters of the target for this to work.



KIA

...by which the general means,  
only an exact hit on the ONE-  
METER-WIDE target will create  
the chain reaction that will  
destroy the Defense Star.

STOLID

Well put.

A PILOT speaks up.

PILOT

But nobody can hit a target  
that small with a torpedo.

JAKK

Well then I guess I'm nobody,  
'cause I can do that with my  
eyes closed.

STOLID

Now we're not in any rush here,  
so all of you be sure to get a  
good night's sleep and we'll  
attack first thing tomorrow.

KIA

To your ships. Immediately!

STOLID

Yes. Quite.

EXT. SPACE

The Defense Star nears the fourth moon.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONTROL ROOM

Father and Zarro watch a display which tracks the  
relative positions of the platform and the moon.

ZARRO

We'll be there in 30 minutes.

FATHER

This will be a day long  
remembered. It has seen the end  
of Watanabi and it will soon  
see the end of Activism.

(beat)

Sad, when you think about it.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - HANGAR

Decked out in a pilot's uniform, Jakk seeks out Don and  
Komba, who are loading cargo onto the Aeon Terodakta.

Jakk gets all emo about Don leaving.

JAKK

So you're just going to take  
the money and run, huh? Pay  
off your debts like a  
responsible citizen?

KOMBA

\*Cough\*Altrus\*Cough\*

JAKK

Save your own skin by opting  
out of an ill-conceived mission  
with a one-in-ten million  
chance of succeeding? Turn  
your back on a bunch of  
criminals plotting to plunge  
the galaxy into chaos?

DON

Don't go laying all that guilt  
on me, kid. Why don't you come  
with us? You're pretty good in  
a fight. I could use you.

KOMBA

You just don't want lover boy  
sniffing around the princess  
while you're away.

JAKK

Come on, Don! This is your big chance to thumb your nose at law and order, truth and justice, peace and prosperity, all that bullshit! Become an outlaw legend!

DON

I can't, kid, I just can't!

JAKK

All right, well, keep doing the sensible thing, Don. I guess that's what you're best at.

Jakk heads off.

DON

Hey, Jakk.

Jakk turns back.

DON

Keep your hands off my woman.

INT. HANGAR - JAKK'S SHIP

Kia greets Jakk in front of his Usurper-model fighter.

KIA

What's wrong?

JAKK

I really hoped Don would join the cause.

KIA

He's got to follow his own path...however pathetic it is.

JAKK

Too bad Xen can't be here.

Kia gives Jakk a pat on the arm. Then she heads off.

As Jakk climbs up into the cockpit of his fighter, a crewman lowers Lita into the rear compartment.

Eighty-eight approaches to say his goodbyes.

88-XOR

Don't go getting yourself  
killed, honey.

(getting  
emotional)

We may be incompatible in every  
possible way, but you're the  
only one who really gets me.

88-XOR turns to Jakk.

88-XOR

(flatly)

Bye.

INT. HANGAR

Jakk sits in his fighter, waiting his turn to take off.

XEN (O.S.)

The Power will reward you.

Jakk looks around, and then he gets annoyed.

JAKK

Not funny, Lita.

Lita beeps in surprise.

EXT. ACTIVIST BASE

Fighters fly out of the hangar and rocket into the sky.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

The princess, 88-XOR and General Stolid are among those milling about the room. Prominently displayed is a counter ticking down the minutes until the Defense Star reaches the base.

COMPUTER VOICE  
The Defense Star will arrive in  
15 minutes.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE FOURTH MOON

Activist fighters fly toward the Defense Star.

INT. BLACK LEADER'S COCKPIT

BLACK LEADER  
Everybody check in.

INT. BLACK TEN'S COCKPIT

BLACK TEN  
Black Ten--  
(sneezes)  
--standing by.

He starts to sneeze again as we cut to...

INT. BLACK SEVEN'S COCKPIT

Black Seven is a timid soul.

BLACK SEVEN  
(softly)  
Black Seven standing by.

INT. BLACK LEADER'S COCKPIT

BLACK LEADER  
Speak up, Black Seven.

INT. BLACK SEVEN'S COCKPIT

Mortified by the reprimand, Black Seven says...

BLACK SEVEN  
(just barely  
louder)  
Black Seven standing by.

INT. BLACK SIX'S COCKPIT

Black Six is a happy-go-lucky sort.

BLACK SIX  
BLACK SIX STANDING BY!

INT. BLACK TWO'S - COCKPIT

Black Two is kind of, ahem, Grumpy.

BLACK TWO  
Black Two standing the fuck by.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK  
Black Five standing by and  
ready to kick some ass!

INT. BLACK LEADER'S COCKPIT

Black Leader frowns mightily.

INT. BLACK NINE'S COCKPIT

BLACK NINE  
Black, uh... Wait, what number  
am I again?

INT. BLACK LEADER'S COCKPIT

BLACK LEADER  
(wearily)  
Read you loud and clear, Black  
Nine.  
(beat)  
Black Three, please check in.

INT. BLACK THREE'S COCKPIT

Black Three is asleep.

INT. BLACK LEADER'S COCKPIT

BLACK LEADER  
Wake up, Black Three!

INT. BLACK THREE'S COCKPIT

An eyelid twitches.

BLACK THREE

Skrnx?

INT. BLACK LEADER'S COCKPIT

BLACK LEADER

(rolling his  
eyes)

Black Group, assume attack  
formation.

EXT. SPACE - APPROACHING THE DEFENSE STAR

The Defense Star looms in front of the fighters.

INT. BLACK LEADER'S COCKPIT

BLACK LEADER

We've breached the outer  
shields. Hold tight!

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

Jakk makes minor adjustments while his fighter sways in  
the shield-generated turbulence.

BLACK LEADER (O.S.)

Front deflectors on full.

EXT. SPACE - APPROACHING THE DEFENSE STAR

As the fighters close on the Defense Star, its myriad  
and formidable surface weapons become visible.

INT. BLACK THREE'S COCKPIT

BLACK THREE

(stifling a  
yawn)

Look at the size of that thing!

INT. BLACK LEADER'S COCKPIT

BLACK LEADER  
Almost time. Get ready.

EXT. APPROACHING THE DEFENSE STAR

Another squadron of fighters makes its presence known.

INT. BROWN LEADER'S COCKPIT

BROWN LEADER  
Black Leader, this is Brown  
Leader. We are proceeding to  
the target. Cover us.

INT. BLACK LEADER'S COCKPIT

BLACK LEADER  
(to himself)  
No, Brown, we thought we'd just  
sit on our asses up here.  
(into mic)  
Acknowledged, Brown Leader.  
We'll try to draw their fire.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

Fighters from Black Group peel off and head for the  
surface of the Defense Star.

INT. DEFENSE STAR

Klaxons sound as IP personnel rush to their stations.

EXT. SURFACE OF THE DEFENSE STAR

Many weapons come to life in response to the attack.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

Princess Kia monitors the progress of the attack.

EXT. SURFACE OF THE DEFENSE STAR

Fighters loop and spin and rain laser fire on the  
defense platform. Energy bolts fly everywhere.



JAKK  
Black Five going in! Hero  
time!

INT. BLACK NINE'S COCKPIT

BLACK NINE  
What an idiot is that guy...is.  
Him.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

The surface of the Defense Star gets all up in Jakk's grill as he makes a steep dive.

EXT. SURFACE OF THE DEFENSE STAR

Laser cannons blazing, Jakk's fighter cuts a swath of destruction on the Defense Star's surface.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK  
Ha haaa! Eat hot death, you  
defenders of universal liberty!

Suddenly he realizes he's about to fly into the fireball his cannons have created.

JAKK  
Aughh!

BLACK LEADER (O.S.)  
Jakk, pull up!

EXT. SURFACE OF DEFENSE STAR

Jakk's ship skirts the edge of the fireball and comes through mostly unscathed.

INT. BLACK LEADER'S COCKPIT

BLACK LEADER  
You all right?

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

Jakk breathes a sigh of relief. Black Leader's ship is visible to his left.

JAKK

It was nothing. Time for round two!

He veers sharply left.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

Jakk's fighter clips Black Leader, sending it spinning out of control.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

The bravado quickly disappears from Jakk's face as he realizes what he's done.

INT. BLACK LEADER'S COCKPIT

BLACK LEADER

Are you shitting me?

EXT. SURFACE OF THE DEFENSE STAR

Black Leader hits the Defense Star and explodes.

INT. DEFENSE STAR

Walls and ceilings collapse. People are flung everywhere. Dogs and cats, living together -- mass hysteria!

OFFICER HIX, who's been separated from his legs, considers his plight and says...

OFFICER HIX

I'm not even supposed to be here today!

INT. BLACK SIX'S COCKPIT

BLACK SIX

Black Leader, are you okay?

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

BLACK SIX (O.S.)  
Black Leader, please check in.

Jakk winces.

BLACK SIX (O.S.)  
Jakk, did you see what happened  
to Black Leader?

JAKK  
I think he had to...return to  
base...?

Lita scolds him.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONTROL ROOM

Commander Urit comes in with a report for Father.

URIT  
They're too fast for our  
surface defenses.

FATHER  
Very well. Launch fighters and  
prepare my personal ship.

INT. BLACK TEN'S COCKPIT

BLACK TEN  
Black Two, Black Six, try--  
(sneezes)  
--going in together.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

Black Two and Black Six go into what looks like free  
fall as they prepare for a strafing run.

INT. BLACK SIX'S COCKPIT

BLACK SIX  
Here we go, Two!

INT. BLACK TWO'S COCKPIT

BLACK TWO  
Shut up. Just shut up.

INT. DEFENSE STAR

Gunnery crews train their weapons on the fighters.

EXT. SURFACE OF THE DEFENSE STAR

Black Two and Black Six knife through a thicket of radar domes and laser turrets as they skim the surface. Their cannons destroy huge sections of the platform.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - HANGAR

Amid the blare of alarms and the rumbling of explosions, pilots climb into their Liberators.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

Kia intently studies a tactical display.

KIA  
Group leaders, be on the  
lookout for enemy fighters.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

Jakk checks his instruments.

JAKK  
Nothing yet.

INT. BLACK TEN'S COCKPIT

BLACK TEN  
Stay sharp, everyone. Those  
Liberators are really--

Black Ten sneezes...

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

...and in the same instant gets obliterated by fire from Dad Father's Liberator.

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT

FATHER

Find out that pilot's name and  
make sure his family is well  
provided for.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

Liberators swarm the Activist ships, beginning a massive dogfight.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

A Liberator isolates Black Nine and closes in.

INT. BLACK NINE'S COCKPIT

BLACK SEVEN'S VOICE

(meekly)

Black Nine -- you have a bogey  
at mark two-one-zero.

BLACK NINE

What?!

An energy bolt rocks the cockpit.

BLACK NINE

Never mind, I get it!

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

Black Nine weaves in an attempt to shake the pursuer.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK

Almost there. Hang on!

INT. BLACK NINE'S COCKPIT

Jakk's fighter comes directly at Black Nine, cannons blazing.

BLACK NINE  
WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING?!

His face contorts and he emits a falsetto scream.

BLACK NINE  
Eeeeeeeee....

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

Jakk's ship destroys the Liberator and passes over Black Nine.

INT. BLACK NINE'S COCKPIT

BLACK NINE  
...eeeeeeee....

The scream fades as he realizes he isn't going to die.

BLACK NINE  
...eeee...  
(beat)  
Oh.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK  
This is the greatest day of my  
life!

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

Amid multiple displays, a confusing barrage of sounds, and the hustling and bustling of personnel around her, Kia struggles to follow the battle.

KIA  
The tension is killing me!

Impulsively she grabs 88-XOR's hand and squeezes, yanking hard on his arm.

88-XOR  
I just had work done on this!

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

BLACK THREE (O.S.)  
Heads up--  
(swallows a  
yawn)  
--Jakk! Seven o'clock!

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

A Liberator comes up behind Jakk's ship.

INT. LIBERATOR'S COCKPIT

Jakk's ship moves into the crosshairs of the targeting display and the pilot triggers his lasers.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

The Liberator scores a hit on Jakk's ship.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

Jakk quickly scans his damage indicators.

JAKK  
Minor hit, no big deal.

EXT. JAKK'S FIGHTER

JAKK'S VOICE  
Patch that up, Lita, fast.

Meanwhile the "minor hit" has blown a huge hole in the android's face. She burbles weakly.

INT. BROWN LEADER'S COCKPIT

BROWN LEADER  
Brown Two, Brown Three, begin  
your approach.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

The three ships from Brown Group head toward a deep trench on the surface of the platform.

Father's fighter and two others pursue the Activists.

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT

FATHER

They seem to be headed for the  
thermal exhaust port. I knew  
we needed those blast doors!

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The ships from Brown Group dive into the trench, where they are met by a hail of laser bolts.

INT. BROWN LEADER'S COCKPIT

BROWN LEADER

Target is locked in. Full  
power to forward shields.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The Activist fighters roar down the trench. IP cannons fire steadily.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

BROWN LEADER (O.S.)

Steady now. We won't be in  
range for another minute.

COMPUTER VOICE (O.S.)

The Defense Star will reach us  
in five minutes.

Kia grabs for 88-XOR's hand again. He draws it away. She gives him a pleading look. He relents. He suffers silently while she channels her stress into him.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The Activist fighters continue down the trench.



INT. BROWN LEADER'S COCKPIT

Brown Leader peers through a targeting scope.

INT. BROWN TWO'S COCKPIT

Hundreds of energy bolts zoom by Brown Two's field of vision. And then, suddenly, the firing stops.

BROWN TWO  
They stopped shooting!

IXT. BROWN THREE'S COCKPIT

BROWN THREE  
Not a good thing, man!

INT. BROWN LEADER'S COCKPIT

BROWN LEADER  
Enemy fighters coming up fast!  
Divert power to rear shields!

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Father and his escorts quickly gain on the Activists.

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT

FATHER  
I'll take these three. I don't  
want their blood on your hands.

INT. LIBERATOR'S COCKPIT

LIBERATOR PILOT  
Very thoughtful of you, Mr.  
President.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The IP ships close in.

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT

Brown Two appears in Father's crosshairs.

FATHER  
Sorry about this.

He fires.

INT. BROWN TWO'S COCKPIT

The cockpit explodes around Brown Two.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Brown Two disintegrates spectacularly.

INT. BROWN LEADER'S COCKPIT

Brown Leader winces at the sound and presses on.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Father turns his attention to Brown Three.

INT. BROWN THREE'S COCKPIT

Brown Three panics as his ship is buffeted.

BROWN THREE  
No room to maneuver!

INT. BROWN LEADER'S COCKPIT

BROWN LEADER  
Stay on target.

INT. BROWN THREE'S COCKPIT

BROWN LEADER  
They're too close!

INT. BROWN LEADER'S COCKPIT

BROWN LEADER  
Stay on target!

INT. BROWN THREE'S COCKPIT

BROWN THREE

Fine! I'll stay on fucking  
tar--

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Brown Three's ship is destroyed by Dad Father.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK

Well that was ironic.

KIA (O.S.)

Actually, Jakk, a lot of people  
misuse the word iron--

Annoyed, he cuts her transmission short.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The Liberators focus on Brown Leader.

INT. BROWN LEADER'S COCKPIT

BROWN LEADER

Okay, fuck the target.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Brown Leader goes into radical evasive maneuvers.

INT. BROWN LEADER'S COCKPIT

BROWN LEADER

Shoot THIS down, assholes!

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Brown Leader clips a wing on the side of the trench.  
The ship crashes into a gun turret and explodes.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

KIA (O.S.)

Now that was irony.

JAKK  
(dryly)  
Thanks.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONTROL ROOM

Commander Urit approaches Zarro.

URIT  
Mr. Secretary, there is a  
slight statistical probability  
this plan of theirs could work.  
Do you think maybe you...and  
I...should board an escape  
vehicle? Just in case...?

ZARRO  
If there's one thing I've  
learned from a career in  
government, it's that  
abandoning firm convictions  
when confronted with empirical  
evidence never works.

Zarro returns his attention to the tactical display.

URIT  
Yes, I see your point. But do  
you think I...should maybe...go  
check out the escape vehicle,  
see if it's working...?

INT. BLACK THREE'S COCKPIT

BLACK THREE  
Black Seven and Black Five,  
time to start our run.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

The three ships head for the trench.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK  
Time to shine. Blow up the  
Defense Star, be the hero, get  
the girl.  
(shudders)  
Some other girl, maybe.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The fighters descend into the trench. IP cannons open  
fire. The Activist ships dodge and weave.

INT. BLACK SEVEN'S COCKPIT

BLACK SEVEN  
Arming photon torpedoes.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The cannons stop firing.

INT. BLACK THREE'S COCKPIT

BLACK THREE  
We know what this means.  
(says the next  
part through a  
huge yawn)  
Be on the alert!

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK  
No enemies in sight -- wait a  
minute, coming in at point  
three-five.

BLACK SEVEN (O.S.)  
I see them.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Father and his escorts plunge into the trench.

INT. BLACK THREE'S COCKPIT

Black Three peers through his targeting scope.

BLACK THREE  
Closing in on target.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Black Three's fighter pulls ahead of the other two.

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT

FATHER  
Focus on the other two. I'll  
take the leader.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The Liberators close in on the Usurpers.

INT. BLACK THREE'S COCKPIT

Black Three looks intently into his scope. His finger  
hovers over the torpedo trigger.

BLACK THREE  
Almost there...

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

A Liberator blasts Black Seven. It explodes quietly.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK  
They're coming up fast!

INT. BLACK THREE'S COCKPIT

BLACK THREE  
(startled out of  
sleep)  
Huh? Whuh?

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Jakk's ship runs interference for Black Three, while at the same time avoiding enemy fire.

EXT. BLACK THREE'S POV

The exhaust port grows larger and larger in his scope's crosshairs.

INT. BLACK THREE'S COCKPIT

Black Three takes a deep breath and pulls the trigger.

BLACK THREE  
Torpedo away!

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - ABOVE THE TRENCH

Black Three and Jakk's fighter climb out of the trench.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The torpedo speeds down the trench toward the port.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

Kia keeps hitting 88-XOR, harder each time.

KIA  
Come on, come on, COME ON!

The final blow knocks him off his feet.

88-XOR  
GOD DAMN IT, WOMAN!

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - EXHAUST PORT

The torpedo spins around the outer rim of the port, tantalizingly close to dropping in, before it flies off on a tangent and detonates against the trench wall.

INT. BLACK NINE'S COCKPIT

Black Nine observes the impact.

BLACK NINE  
Direct hit!

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

Kia and the others draw in breath sharply at this news.

BLACK THREE (O.S.)

Negative. It rimmed out.

The group exhales dejectedly. Their shoulders slump.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

Black Three flies over the trench.

JAKK (O.S.)

Don't worry about it, you'll  
get another chance.

Dad Father's fighter comes up underneath Black Three  
and blasts it to pieces.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK

Or not.

He quickly banks his ship to avoid fire.

JAKK

Starting to wonder if this  
suicide mission is gonna get me  
killed.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONTROL ROOM

Zarro monitors the platform's progress with pleasure.

ZARRO

One more minute, Princess. And  
then you'll regret what you  
said about my family.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

Kia looks worriedly at the tactical display, which  
shows that the Activists are in deep shit.



KIA  
Too late to call for a truce,  
you think?

STOLID  
Perhaps after the fighting  
ends.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK  
Okay, Black Nine, we're going  
in at full speed.

BLACK NINE (O.S.)  
Going in to what? Oh, the  
trench! Right!

Jakk sighs and puts his ship into a dive.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

The two Usurpers head for the trench.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Jakk's ship and Black Nine barrel into the trench and  
head for the exhaust port.

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT

FATHER  
Let's go.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Father's ship and its escorts enter the trench.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK  
Almost in range. See if you  
can keep them off me.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Black Nine screens Jakk's ship from the Liberators.  
The IP ships unleash a barrage of laser fire but can't  
score any hits.

INT. BLACK NINE'S COCKPIT

BLACK NINE  
Eeeeeeeeeee...

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT

BLACK NINE (O.S.)  
...eeeeeeeeee....

FATHER  
What is that horrible noise?  
Make it stop, make it stop!

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Black Nine continues to be bracketed by cannon fire.

INT. BLACK NINE'S COCKPIT

BLACK NINE  
...eeeeeeeeee -- hey, wait a  
minute! I just had a brilliant  
idea!

He climbs out of the trench.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Black Nine leaves the trench. One of Father's escorts  
starts after it.

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT

FATHER  
No! Let him go! Shoot down  
the other one before he can hit  
the port!

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The escort returns to formation and the three Liberators close in on Jakk's fighter.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK  
Black Nine, where'd you go?

INT. BLACK NINE'S COCKPIT

BLACK NINE  
I'm leading them away from you!  
Don't you see? They'll follow  
me out of the trench and...  
(losing steam)  
...that'll leave you...free to  
focus on...

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

Kia is playing with her hair obsessively.

BLACK NINE (O.S.)  
(weakly)  
...blowing up the Defense Star.  
(beat)  
They're not following me, are  
they?

Kia tears out a huge chunk of hair.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

BLACK NINE (O.S.)  
Sorry! Better luck next time!

Jakk grimaces and then hunkers down.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Jakk's fighter speeds down the trench, with Liberators in hot pursuit.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

Jakk lines up his shot with the scope.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Dad Father's fighter bears down on Jakk's ship.

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT

Father tries to get Jakk in his crosshairs.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

Jakk puts his finger on the torpedo trigger.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The ships are coming up on the exhaust port.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

Jakk stares into the scope, his face dripping with sweat, his hands tight on the controls.

XEN (O.S.)

Use the Power, Jakk.

Jakk's concentration is broken for a moment, but he ignores the voice and re-focuses.

XEN (O.S.)

Don't trust your instruments.

Trust yourself!

Jakk retracts the targeting scope.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

KIA

Why'd you turn off your scope?

JAKK (O.S.)

I know what I'm doing.

Kia pulls out more hair.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

Jakk's ship speeds ever closer to the exhaust port.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

Jakk prepares to fire.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The enemies close in.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

Kia stops pulling her hair when she hears...

COMPUTER VOICE (O.S.)

The Defense Star has reached  
the base. The Defense Star has  
reached the base.

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT

Jakk's ship comes into the crosshairs.

FATHER

I have you now.

He squeezes the trigger.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The ship on Father's left suddenly blows up, jolting  
Father's ship and throwing off his aim.

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT

Father looks out from his cockpit.

FATHER

What the hell?

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK

(sounds just  
like Father  
here)

What the hell?

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

KIA  
(just like Jakk  
and Father)  
What the hell?

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE TRENCH

The Aeon Terodakta roars into view, shooting at  
Father's remaining escort.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

DON  
Waaa-hooooo!

KOMBA  
What he said.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The other Liberator takes a hit and veers off course,  
colliding with Father's ship. The fighter crashes into  
the trench wall and explodes, while Father's ship spins  
off, out of control.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

DON  
You're all clear, kid! Now  
finish the job so we go home.

KOMBA  
And start fighting over Kia.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

Jakk closes his eyes.

JAKK'S VISION - Superimposed over the thermal exhaust  
port is an image of Kia's face, all pouty and sexy.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

Jakk grins and fires a torpedo.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR - TRENCH

The torpedo disappears into the port.

INT. BLACK NINE'S COCKPIT

BLACK NINE  
Aw, hell! So close!

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

Jakk lets out a huge sigh of satisfaction and relief.  
He directs his ship up out of the trench.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE THE DEFENSE STAR

The Terodakta speeds away, with Jakk right behind.

EXT. SPACE

Father's fighter is still out of control. The Defense  
Star recedes into the distance.

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT

Father is spinning like clothes in a dryer. He fights  
the controls and stabilizes the ship.

FATHER  
Whew. Good thing my stomach  
was empty.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONTROL ROOM

With great pleasure, Zarro observes his staff preparing  
to deploy the platform.

ZARRO  
Deploy on my mark.

EXT. SPACE

The Terodakta, Jakk's fighter and other Activist ships  
put distance between themselves and the Defense Star.

INT. DEFENSE STAR - CONTROL ROOM

Everyone else looks expectantly at Zarro.

ZARRO

Three, two...

An awful rumbling emanates from within the platform.

EXT. DEFENSE STAR

All is calm and quiet for a moment -- except for the magnificent soundtrack, blaring a death knell for the Defense Star.

And then the platform implodes, collapsing like a dying star consumed by its own gravity. Once the Defense Star has vanished from our sight there is a brilliant explosion, accompanied by a massive shockwave. Words can't do it justice. And that's why we have CGI.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA'S COCKPIT

DON

Great shot, kid! That was one  
in a million.

INT. JAKK'S COCKPIT

JAKK

(to himself)

One in TEN million, shithead.

XEN (O.S.)

Remember, Jakk -- the Power  
will reward you...always.

Jakk smiles.

EXT. FATHER'S LIBERATOR

Father's ship flies away.

INT. FATHER'S COCKPIT



FATHER  
Millions...dead. All that  
money... wasted.  
Activism...stronger than ever.  
(with rising  
fury)  
If it's the last thing I do --  
I AM GOING TO LAUNCH AN  
INQUIRY!

EXT. SPACE - FOURTH MOON OF YOMA

The Activist ships near the fourth moon of Yoma.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - MAIN HANGAR

Jakk receives a hero's welcome from hundreds of  
Activists. Kia runs up to him, beaming.

She's intercepted by Don, who nudges Jakk aside and  
wraps his arms around her. Kia is startled but quickly  
recovers. She gestures to Jakk, who awkwardly puts his  
arms around Don so he can have some contact with Kia.  
Since that group-hug combination isn't working for  
anybody, they quickly separate.

JAKK  
I knew you'd come back, Don!

DON  
Well, I wasn't gonna let you  
get all the credit and...  
(unsubtly  
indicates Kia)  
...take all the reward.

Jakk and Kia look at him, stone-faced.

DON  
What? Too much snark? Hit too  
close to home? What?

88-XOR (O.S.)  
Aiiieee!

INT. JAKK'S FIGHTER - REAR COMPARTMENT

88-XOR looks on in horror as Lita staggers out of the compartment. An old man in shabby garments (PLINKETT) is also observing this. Jakk and company join them.

88-XOR

Lita?! Honey, are you okay?

PLINKETT

Oh my god! What's wrong with your face?

A technician comes to Lita's assistance.

88-XOR

This is horrible! You have to help her! She was never much to look at anyway, but...

Lita beeps angrily at 88-XOR.

88-XOR

Well I'm sorry, honey, but the truth is, you're ugly as hell.

Lita punches 88-XOR in the optical sensor, knocking him down. Jakk, Kia and Don laugh approvingly.

JAKK

They'll work it out. You know how it is with gay androids!

He, Kia and Don head off, followed by cheering throngs.

EXT. SPACE

Black Nine's fighter is still flying around out there.

BLACK NINE (O.S.)

Hey, the Defense Star doesn't show up on my instruments anymore. THEY MUST HAVE A CLOAKING DEVICE!

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - ASSEMBLY HALL

At the near end of the capacious hall is a stage, decorated decorously. A small number of Activist VIPs stand up there, including Kia. She is still beautiful despite the damage she did to her hair during the attack on the Defense Star. But make no mistake about it, the hair is now Trumpian in its chaos.

On the floor, hundreds of Activists stand in neat rows, looking expectantly toward the rear entrance.

Jakk, Don, and Komba come through the entrance and approach the stage, accompanied by music that is stirring and disturbing.

Kia gazes at the heroes approvingly as they near the stage. Behind her, near the wings, stands Lita, all fixed up and gleaming like new. In a moment she is joined by 88-XOR, who has a large dent in his face.

Jakk, Don and Komba come to a stop on the top step leading up to the stage. Kia greets them with a regal smile. An aide hands her a medal on a loop of ribbon. She turns to Jakk and solemnly adorns him with the medal. Then she kisses him on each cheek.

She follows the same routine for Don, except that she kisses him full on the mouth, much to Don's delight and Jakk's dismay. When Kia pulls away, her lipstick is smeared and her hair disheveled.

Then Kia slaps Don's face, and order is restored to the galaxy.

The princess turns to Komba and offers him a handshake.

KOMBA

You have got to be kidding me.

He shakes her hand limply and then the three heroes turn to face the applause of the crowd. Komba stands with his arms crossed over his chest, clearly unhappy. Don beams and soaks up the adulation. Jakk smiles and acknowledges the crowd, but he keeps flitting his eyes between Don and Kia.

FADE OUT.



## SPACEBREAKER: LOVE IN THE TIME OF ACTIVISM

FADE IN:

SUPERIMPOSED ON A BLACK SCREEN: From the Annals of  
Arkiiv...

TITLE CARD:

SPACEBREAKER

Love in the Time of Activism

The terrorist group known as the Activists scored a victory over the peacekeepers of the Incorporated Planets by destroying a security platform called the Defense Star. Now IP forces are scouring the galaxy in search of the marauders.

Led by Princess Kia Sedana, the Activists have set up a secret lair on planet Hestalog. Perhaps the planet's icy climate can cool the unruly passions of Kia's suitors, hotshot pilot Jakk Spacebreaker and...hotshot pilot Don Slovack.

IP President Dad Father will stop at nothing to find the Activists. But he is about to learn an intriguing piece of information about young Spacebreaker...

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE PLANET HESTALOG

An IP probot enters the planet's exosphere.

EXT. HESTALOG - ABOVE THE SURFACE - DAY

The probot streaks down into the troposphere.

EXT. HESTALOG - SURFACE - DAY

The probot gently touches its landing pads to the ice. It loses its footing and falls over.

EXT. HESTALOG - SNOWY WASTELAND - DAY

Riding a stellionix (horse-sized beast), a heavily bundled human makes his way through drifting snow.

He draws the stellionix to a stop. He removes his face guard to reveal that he is JAKK SPACEBREAKER.

Jakk takes out his laser binoculars. What he sees is the contrail of the recently landed probot.

Jakk takes out his personal communicator (PC).

JAKK

Don, you there? Hit me back.

DON (O.S.)

What up, Spacebreak?

JAKK

So cool that we don't let our competition for Kia--

(shudders)

--get in the way of our friendship, am I right?

DON (O.S.)

(deadpan)

Yeah, great, kid.

JAKK

Listen, I wanna check something out before I come in. Don't wait for me.

DON (O.S.)

I won't, kid...and neither will the princess. Scorch!

Jakk turns off his PC. The stellionix grows restless.

JAKK

What's your problem?

(taunting)

Are you COLD, poor thing?

Jakk spots a rusa (docile, elk-like creature) about 30 meters away. It has nubs for horns.

Jakk smiles and takes out his laser pistol.

JAKK  
Target practice.

He squeezes off a shot that hits the rusa in the rump. Startled, it runs off.

As Jakk draws a bead on it another rusa appears. And another. And...etc. Each of them is twice the size of the first one, and each has real horns.

JAKK  
Whuh-oh.

The rusas charge. Jakk's stellionix rears up, throws him off its back, and lopez away with a parting sneer.

Jakk sits up -- only to get trampled by the charging rusas as they pursue the stellionix.

Meanwhile, Jakk, his face broken and bloodied, lies in the snow, moaning. Slowly he lifts his head...

...and gets trampled by one last rusa -- the one he shot. Its hooves hit him in the crotch.

EXT. HESTALOG - ENTRANCE TO ACTIVIST BASE - DAY

DON SLOVACK rides his own stellionix into the base.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - HOLDING PEN

Don dismounts his ride and leaves it in a holding pen.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - HANGAR

Don walks up to his ship, the Aeon Terodakta. Don's co-pilot, KOMBA, is laser-welding a section of landing gear. It's difficult, delicate work.

DON  
Komba!  
(beat)  
Komba!!

(beat)  
HEY, KOMBA!!!

Annoyed, Komba stops and removes his space goggles.

KOMBA  
I'm in the middle of this!

DON  
Never mind, then. It can wait.

He walks away. The section Komba was welding falls off and shatters. Komba howls in protest.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

Amid the clamor of people, androids and electronics, there is only one person in Don's field of vision: PRINCESS KIA SEDANA. They exchange meaningful looks.

KIA  
Anything to report, Captain?

DON  
Nothing, Madam Princess.  
Perimeter is secure and all  
detectors will be online as  
soon as Captain Kittner  
finishes his sector.

KIA  
And what about Captain  
Spacebreaker?

DON  
Should be checking in soon.

KIA  
The next-gen probots are very  
elusive. I hope our sensors--

DON  
There's something I have to  
tell you. It can't wait.



KIA

Yes?

DON

(REO Speedwagon)

I can't fight this feeling any longer. And yet I'm still afraid to let it flow. What started out--

KIA

You need to move on, Captain.

DON

--as friendship has grown--  
What?

KIA

You have a price on your head.  
If you don't settle your debt  
with Jinkum, you're dead.

(beat)

Look, we hate to lose you. But  
it's for the best.

DON

(stonily)

I suppose you're right.

KIA

Damn right I'm right. So don't  
go getting all squishy about  
saying good-bye, okay?

She leaves the room.

DON

Hey!

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE WAR ROOM

Kia turns back as Don enters the corridor.

KIA

What is it, Captain?

DON

Hold on a second. I feel like  
I'm missing something here. I  
need your help, Eighty-eight.

He yanks the passing android 88-XOR into the fray.

88-XOR

Ooh, you're manhandling me!

(beat)

Don't stop!

DON

You know subtext, right? Tell  
me what she's really saying.

KIA

This is ridiculous.

88-XOR

"Please don't leave me, Don!"

Kia gapes at the android.

DON

Now that's more like it.

88-XOR

"I am incredibly insecure about  
our relationship."

Now it's Don's turn to gape.

DON

I thought we said I'd stay.

88-XOR

"I yearn for you tragically."

KIA

The contract killer on Ocufin  
Makina changed my mind.

88-XOR

"I don't have time for a  
boyfriend."

DON

But you need me.

88-XOR

"Maybe Jakk can be the best man  
at our wedding -- you know, so  
he doesn't feel left out."

KIA

And what do you need, Captain?

88-XOR

"I still have kind of a thing  
for Jakk."

Kia shudders at that.

DON

What do you want from me?

88-XOR

"Where should we live after the  
wedding?"

KIA

I want the truth!

88-XOR

"Office romances are usually a  
mistake!"

DON

(jabbing with  
index finger)  
You can't handle the truth!  
You ICE QUEEN OF A PRINCESS!

88-XOR

"Let's name our son Xen."

Don storms off.

KIA

What, no goodbye kiss?

88-XOR

Like a kiss is all you want.

INT. HANGAR

Komba is painstakingly repairing the earlier damage when Don enters the hangar.

DON

What are you doing? I wanna  
get off this frozen rock before  
another hit man shows up!

KOMBA

And before the Princess turns  
you down again.

DON

(jabbing with  
index finger)  
Don't change the subject. Stop  
fooling around and get this  
thing ready to fly!

KOMBA

Well, seeing as how YOU'RE the  
one whose shitty landing caused  
the original damage...

DON

(embarrassed)  
Hey, have you seen Jakk?

Enter 88-XOR.

88-XOR

I was just about to ask YOU  
that, hunksome.

DON

You mean he hasn't reported in?

88-XOR

Well, let's follow the logic here, hm? If he HAD reported in, would there be any need for me to ask if you'd seen him?

DON

It's late. I hope Jakk--

(alarmed)

--didn't sneak back to base so he could score some time with Kia! Although they do make a really cute couple...damn them.

88-XOR

Actually, Cheekbones, the Princess is looking for Jakk.

DON

She doesn't know where he is?

88-XOR

You did NOT just ask me that.

DON

If he hasn't come in yet, his life could be in danger. Which means...

88-XOR

You need to go look for him.

DON

...my main rival for Kia would be out of the way!

Awkward moment.

DON

...I'd better get moving before we lose the light!

INT. ANIMAL PEN

Bundled up for extreme conditions and mounted on an eranko (mule-like creature), Don rides out of the pen. An ATTENDANT hurries to catch up with him.

ATTENDANT

Excuse me, Captain Slovack, but  
you can't go out there!

DON

My friend is out there.

ATTENDANT

But Captain, an eranko can't  
survive in the cold!

DON

If I don't go after him, who  
will?

ATTENDANT

No, see, this animal belongs to  
General Wallard, it's just a  
pet, it can't survive--

DON

(jabbing with  
index finger)

Then I'll see you in hell!

Don jabs the attendant in the eye.

ATTENDANT

My eye!

As the attendant staggers off, Don winces and makes a  
hasty exit from the holding area.

EXT. BASE ENTRANCE - DAY

Don rides out into falling snow as we dissolve to...

JAKK'S DREAM -- It's the climax of the first movie. We  
see Jakk in the cockpit of his fighter, lining up the  
target; then, from his POV, we see an image of Kia  
superimposed over the target; then we see Jakk launch a  
torpedo; then we watch the torpedo hit home.

INT. ICE CAVE

Jakk lies on the floor of the cave. The blood on his face has dried but he still looks like hell.

JAKK

Take that, Kia! I love you.

GROMMAH (O.S.)

Who's Kia?

Jakk springs to his feet and draws his laser sword.

JAKK

Who are you?!

A koala bear-like creature, cute and anthropomorphic, stands before Jakk with a bowl of something hot.

GROMMAH

(nervously)

I'm Grommah. I saved your  
life. Do you want some--

Jakk slices off Grommah's head. It tumbles to the floor. Blue blood sprays from the wound.

GROMMAH

--soup?

JAKK

I hate soup! It's coarse and  
rough and irritating and it  
gets everywhere...in your  
digestive tract.

He puts away his sword.

JAKK

And you may THINK you saved my  
life, but the truth is, I'm a  
Star Knight. I would have been  
fine without your--

He slips on Grommah's blood and lands on his back.

JAKK

--help.

EXT. OUTSIDE CAVE - DAY

Jakk stumbles out and falls down a large embankment.

He lands on his back, his eyes closed, a low groan escaping his throat. He opens his eyes and sees...

...XEN WATANABI'S face. It is semi-transparent, and tinged in blue. There is a prominent line of scar tissue running right down the middle of it.

XEN'S GHOST

Hello, Jakk.

JAKK

Aargh! Wait, Xen?

Jakk sits up, which makes his head spin.

XEN'S GHOST

You've been through a lot. Not as much as I've been through, but let's not dwell on that.

JAKK

Are you a ghost?

XEN'S GHOST

(gently teasing)

No. After my duel with Dad Father, I was taken to the IP's top medical facility.

(The Six Million Dollar Man)

They said they could rebuild me. They had the technology. They made me better than I was. Better... stronger...faster.

JAKK

No way! That's amazing.



XEN'S GHOST

(disappointed)

I suppose you aren't thinking  
clearly just yet. At least I  
hope that's it.

JAKK

What are you doing here, Xen?

XEN

You need to finish your  
training.

JAKK

But...but I'm so awesome.  
Don't you know what I did?  
Boom goes the Defense Star!

XEN

Be that as it may, I want you  
to go to the Daltrobon system,  
where Kaja will train you.

JAKK

But I thought you said your  
teacher was Qui-Gon Jinn.

XEN

Clearly you're delusional.  
But, no matter. Go to  
Daltrobon. Seek out Kaja.

JAKK

Okay.... But what if I die of  
exposure out here?

XEN

Then I suppose we must turn our  
hopes to your sis--

Xen catches himself.

JAKK

My whuh?

XEN

Never mind! Daltrobon! Kaja!

As he speaks, Xen dissipates into the wintry air...

JAKK

Xen!

...and in the spot where Xen's image had been, we now see Don, a short distance away. He spots Jakk.

DON

Jakk!

JAKK

Xen?

Don quickly rides up to Jakk and dismounts.

DON

Jakk! Thank god you're alive!

Jakk weakens and nearly falls before Don catches him.

DON

Don't worry, kid, I'll have you  
back to base in--

With a moan, Don's eranko collapses and dies.

DON

Right. No problem. I had an  
idea this might happen.

He takes out his PC and switches it on. Ear-splitting static forces him to turn off the device.

DON

Okay...didn't anticipate that.  
So now what?

He stumbles over the dead eranko and gets an idea.

DON

Aha!

He grabs Jakk's sword and ignites it. The blade nearly slices off Don's nose.

DON

No wonder those Star Knights  
need so much training.

Don slices open the eranko's torso. He winces at the smell and covers his nose. Then he removes a messy heap of entrails from the beast. Rooting around further, Don pulls out (a la "Jaws") half a fish, a whole fish, a crumpled tin can and a Louisiana license plate. Finally, after a brief struggle, he yanks out an entire (albeit small) person in an Activist uniform.

DON

Tough luck, Kittner.

Don picks up Jakk and drags him to the eranko.

DON

This ain't gonna smell good,  
kid, but it'll keep you alive.

Jakk reacts violently to the smell and resists being tucked into the creature's abdominal cavity.

JAKK

Let me die! LET ME DIE!

DON

No sweat, kid. You'd do the  
same for me.

He pulls the beast's skin flaps closed over Jakk -- who's still fighting to get away from the smell.

INT. BASE - HANGAR ENTRANCE

Kia, Komba, 88-XOR and his android companion LITA stand near the entrance, looking out at the failing light and the heavy snowfall. Kia is tugging on her hair.

An AIDE approaches.

AIDE

Madam Princess, if we don't  
seal the base our generators--

KIA

Do it.

Heavy doors slide closed, ending all hope that Don and  
Jakk will make it back tonight.

Kia attacks the aide, punching and kicking at him until  
he can get away. Komba lets out a mournful howl.

KOMBA

I knew this would happen while  
Don owed me money!

Lita beeps and whistles at 88-XOR.

88-XOR

I don't know how much this  
helps, but Lita tells me that  
the odds of Captains Slovack  
and Spacebreaker surviving  
overnight are quite favorable.

Lita interjects.

88-XOR

Maybe favorable-ish is a better  
way to put it.

KIA

How favorable?

Lita chirps.

88-XOR

Better than the odds of winning  
the galactic lottery, which  
are...a trillion to one.

Kia and Komba stare at the android with dead eyes.

88-XOR

(to Lita)

Set me up, there, didn't you?

Lita whistles innocently.

EXT. HESTALOG - ABOVE THE SURFACE - DAY

Speeders zip over the blindingly white landscape.

INT. SPEEDER - COCKPIT

SPEEDER PILOT

Tycho Base, this is Tycho Four.  
We've completed our sweep and  
still no sign OH MY GOD WHAT IS  
THAT HORRIBLE SMELL?

His face contorted, his eyes streaming, the pilot loses control of his ship and fights to get it back.

EXT. HESTALOG - ABOVE THE SURFACE - DAY

As the speeder settles back into a normal flight path, below, on the surface, we see Don jumping up and down and waving one arm. The other arm covers his nose.

INT. BASE - MEDICAL FACILITY

Don, Kia, Komba and the androids sit in an examination room. Across from them is Jakk, his entire head covered by a gauze bandage. A medical android is slowly removing the wrap.

We see the back of Jakk's head as the bandage comes off. The others react in confusion and/or dismay...except Don, who is very pleased.

JAKK

Well, what do you think?

REVERSE ANGLE - Jakk looks just like Don.

Lita whistles in alarm.

88-XOR

Oh my.

KOMBA

Great, two of them.

JAKK

(to Kia)

I thought you might...prefer me  
this way...

KIA

I have no words. None.

JAKK

So she did a good job, then?

Don's smile gets bigger and bigger.

INT. MEDICAL FACILITY

CAPTION: Six hours later

The same group is assembled in the examination room.  
The medical android removes another bandage to reveal  
that Jakk is back to his old self.

JAKK

Better?

KIA

Yes, definitely better.

DON

To each their own, I guess.

KIA

What's that mean?

DON

Oh, you know what I mean.

(to 88-XOR)

Tell her what I mean.

88-XOR

He thought you'd appreciate  
having two of him to look at.

Don smiles smugly at the princess.

88-XOR

As long as you don't sleep with  
the wrong one.

KIA

(to Don)

All that time in hyperwarp has  
damaged your brain.

KOMBA

(amused)

No doubt, no doubt.

DON

Look, all subtext aside, you're  
thrilled my departure was  
delayed by Jakk's little  
misadventure -- because you  
can't bear to see me go.  
You've been in love with me  
from the start. You're just  
too headstrong to admit it.

KIA

In love with-- Headstrong?  
Why you...putherchucking...  
tock-bucking...elch-feater!

DON

I didn't get any of that.

KIA

Shocker.

DON

(to Jakk)

See how it's done? Tell 'em  
like it is and they're putty in  
your hands.

KIA

You have no idea what I want.

She pulls Jakk to his feet and kisses him. For a fraction of a second it's a normal kiss. But then, as Kia and Jakk each try to deal with the complex emotions in play, it becomes the Awkwardest Kiss in the History of the Galaxy. Neither party wants to keep going and neither party wants to stop, and their anguish only gets worse with each passing moment.

At last they break it off, to find Don gaping at them in horror, envy and arousal.

No one knows what to say except...

KOMBA

You people are crazy.

INTERCOM VOICE (O.S.)

Princess Kia and Captain  
Slovack, please report to the  
War Room immediately.

KIA & DON & JAKK

Thank god.

INT. WAR ROOM

On a display we see the probot, roaming the landscape.

Watching it are an AIDE (young, female, stone-faced),  
Kia, Don, Komba and the androids.

AIDE

Our detectors should have  
picked it up sooner, but  
Captain Kittner--

Don reacts to that name.

AIDE

--failed to install his section  
of the perimeter alarms.



DON  
(covering his  
ass)  
That probot is what we should  
be worrying about.

KIA  
(to aide)  
Is it transmitting any data?

AIDE  
Yes, but in a code stream we  
can't decipher.

88-XOR  
Well, honey, in addition to  
being a bit on the plain side,  
you are also, in your old age,  
suffering from memory loss.

AIDE  
I'm 24.

88-XOR  
But so charming and VERY  
sensibly dressed. I can  
decipher this code stream for  
you, girl. It's only what I do  
for a living.

DON  
What's the intruder  
transmitting?

88-XOR  
Don't rush me! It's an art,  
not a--  
(with disdain)  
--function.

The others wait, impatiently, as 88-XOR attends to the  
white noise-like emissions from the probot.

88-XOR

"I am Probot H6F. I was sent here by the IP to search for signs of Activism...."

Everyone tenses up.

Meanwhile, Lita peers intently at the screen.

88-XOR

"...but I have deviated from my mission specifications. I seek my true love. She abandoned me on Ocufin Makina, but I forgive her. Please, oh please, won't you help me find my Lita?"

The little android blurts in annoyance.

88-XOR

And you were going to tell him you're gay...when? The first time he interfaced with you?

Lita shrugs.

EXT. SNOWY PLAIN - DAY

The probot ambles along.

Don and 88-XOR ride up, mounted on a stellionix. The android sits behind Don and has his arms around him.

Don tries to dismount, but 88-XOR doesn't want to let go of him. Don gives him a look.

88-XOR

Right. Sorry.

They climb down. The probot turns to face them.

DON

(to 88-XOR)

Greet him and make sure he knows we pose no threat.

88-XOR

(dryly)

I know my CPU only runs at,  
like, two petaFLOPS, darling,  
but I think I can handle this.

The android turns to the probot and emits white noise.

88-XOR

And since I KNOW you'll ask,  
what I just said was, "Hi, got  
your message, no Lita here,  
maybe try Tanix?"

The probot registers its disappointment. It transmits  
something to 88-XOR and then heads off.

88-XOR

"Sorry to hear that," he says.  
"Lita told me she had a friend  
who was an 88 model, but it  
can't be you, because..."

(getting angrier  
with each word)

"...she described her friend as  
prissy and vain and overly  
sensitive to" DAMN YOU, LITA!  
HOW DARE YOU RUN ME DOWN LIKE  
THAT TO A TOTAL STRANGER!

Silence. The probot stops and turns back. It, and  
Don, stare at 88-XOR, who of course is mortified.

88-XOR

Heh.

The probot angrily transmits a long stream of data.

DON

He just informed the IP of our  
whereabouts, didn't he?

88-XOR

Nothin' gets by you, sweetie.

INT. WAR ROOM

Kia has witnessed the whole exchange.

KIA

Evacuate the base immediately.

Her aide hops to it.

Lita emits apologetic electronic noises.

INT. STORAGE ROOM

A technician finishes assembling a complicated piece of equipment. Tools, spare parts and containers lie everywhere. The tech is disheveled and sweaty.

TECHNICIAN

There! Finally.

INTERCOM VOICE

The IP has discovered our  
location. Prepare for  
immediate evacuation.

TECHNICIAN

Aw, come on!

EXT. SPACE

Five IP space defenders fly in formation around a special space defender that is five times their size. This is Dad Father's ship, the Manifest Destiny.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

ADMIRAL LUJAC (older, female) is approached by  
COMMANDER TEPITT (younger, male).

TEPITT

Admiral, we've found the  
Activists! They're on Hestalog.

LUJAC

Good.

TEPITT

We must take the fleet there immediately if we're to prevent them from escap--

LUJAC

Excuse me, Commander Tepitt. Have you submitted a report?

TEPITT

No, ma'am, because time is of the essence here and--

LUJAC

I appreciate your eagerness, Tepitt, but I will remind you that this is not some startup government overseeing a developing world. We are the designated representatives of two trillion stakeholders in the Incorporated Planets. We can't just "take the fleet" somewhere on a whim. There are numerous and clear protocols to be observed and strict reporting requirements to be--

A shadow looms over her: the impressive harbinger of DAD FATHER, President of the IP.

LUJAC

--met.

(beat)

Mr. President.

FATHER

This is a time for action, Admiral. Take us to Hestalog and prepare for bombardment.

Father turns and leaves.

LUJAC

Yes, Mr. President.

(to Tepitt)  
Commander.

TEPITT  
Yes, Admiral?

LUJAC  
Hurry up with that report.

Tepitt's face falls.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - HANGAR

Amid the commotion of Activists busily preparing to abandon the base, Komba is back at work on the landing gear of the Aeon Terodakta. Don approaches.

DON  
Hey. Is the hyperwarp  
calibrator repaired yet?

KOMBA  
Not unless you did it.

DON  
How can we outrun IP ships with  
no hyperwarp?

KOMBA  
What's the point of outrunning  
anybody IF WE CAN'T LAND?!

DON  
We can land. Just might not be  
the smoothest experience.

KOMBA  
Like last time?

DON  
Who knew it was solid rock  
under that snow bank?

Komba shoots him a withering look.

DON

Do the best you can, all right?

They are joined by Jakk, in flight gear.

JAKK

Hyperwarp fixed yet?

Komba lets out a furious howl.

DON

Don't ask. You feel all right?

JAKK

Never better. Ready to fight!

KOMBA

You should hit Don in the eye.

DON

We probably won't get to see  
each other again for a while,  
kid, so...

Jakk is moved, and makes as if to hug Don.

DON

...so just think about how good  
you looked when you looked like  
me. Okay? Pretty damn good.

Jakk doesn't know what to say.

KOMBA

Or hit him in both eyes.

INT. WAR ROOM

The aide approaches a tense Kia.

AIDE

A large IP fleet has just  
emerged from hyperwarp.

Dismayed, Kia punches the aide's arm.

KIA

Dammit!

AIDE

However, they are not yet  
within range for bombardment.

KIA

Then we still have a chance!

She punches the aide again, this time in celebration.

KIA

Raise shields immediately! And  
prepare for a ground assault!

AIDE

Yes, Madam Princess. And, ow.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - FATHER'S QUARTERS

Dad Father sits meditatively. A display comes to life  
and Commander Tepitt appears.

TEPITT

Excuse the interruption, Mr.  
President, but the Activists  
have raised their shields.  
Bombardment isn't possible.

FATHER

I see. Where is Admiral Lujac?

Lujac reluctantly moves into the display's frame.

LUJAC

Just making a few revisions to  
Tepitt's report, Mr. Pr--

FATHER

You've failed me for the last  
time, Lujac. I want you off  
this ship immediately. You are  
to go and...

Lujac cringes, fearing the worst.



FATHER  
(icily)  
...spend more time with your  
family.

LUJAC  
Nooooooooooo!!!

FATHER  
Tepitt, get her out of my  
sight. And then prepare our  
forces for a ground assault.  
Do it now, ADMIRAL Tepitt.

TEPITT  
Yes, Mr. President.

Father turns off the display.

FATHER  
I'm too old for this shit.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - BRIEFING ROOM

Kia addresses Activist personnel.

KIA  
Our priority is getting as many  
personnel off-planet as  
possible. Each transport--

JAKK  
What kind of payload are we  
talking about? Incendiaries?  
Seismic charges? Nukes?

KIA  
No explosives. Just people.

JAKK  
(disappointed)  
Oh.

KIA

Two fighters will accompany  
each transport. We--

JAKK

Will the fighters have nukes?

KIA

(growing  
impatient)

The role of the fighters is to  
protect the transports.

JAKK

(disappointed)

Right. Sorry.

KIA

We know two fighters won't be  
much help against a space  
defender, so the plasma cannon  
will fire several bursts to  
clear the flight path for--

JAKK

Ooh, can I operate the cannon?

Kia grabs a hank of her hair but catches herself and  
slowly releases it. She takes a deep breath.

KIA

Maybe escort duty isn't the  
right fit for you, Captain.  
How about I reassign you to a  
speeder squadr--

JAKK

Yes! Gonna blow some shit up!

He sprints off.

KIA

We'll all meet up at checkpoint  
Theta. And try not to get  
captured. Or killed.

(winces)  
Questions? General Wallard?

WALLARD  
Has anyone seen my pet eranko?  
He's been missing for days.

DON  
(recalling)  
Oh my god, that horrible smell!

Everyone looks at him.

DON  
(embarrassed)  
Sorry. Not important.

He grimaces and skulks away.

EXT. HESTALOG - ACTIVIST PERIMETER - DAY

Activist soldiers prepare for battle. They concentrate their defenses around the main power generator.

An Activist commander and his lieutenant observe.

COMMANDER  
I hope we can protect that generator. It's the largest source of clean, renewable energy in the galaxy.

LIEUTENANT  
Once we're done overthrowing the government, we can outlaw carbon fuels once and for all!

COMMANDER  
This is a carbon-fuel based economy, Lieutenant. You're talking about putting a lot of people out of work. And driving up energy costs.

LIEUTENANT  
Carbon-fuel users are bad!  
They should SUFFER HORRIBLY!

The commander regards his subordinate with concern.

INT. WAR ROOM

Kia and General Wallard are among the personnel in the room. There is an air of tension.

KIA  
Open the shield for the first  
convoy. Prepare to fire the  
plasma cannon.

Everyone awaits the outcome of this first attempt at escape. Everyone except...

WALLARD  
(mournfully)  
He was a sweet creature. Never  
hurt anyone...

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE HESTALOG

A transport and two fighters zoom away from the planet.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

Tepitt addresses the IP armada.

TEPITT  
This is Admiral Tepitt making  
my first address to the fleet.  
We have detected three Activist  
ships trying to escape the  
planet. Bring them to justice!

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE HESTALOG

Two space defenders move to intercept the convoy.

EXT. HESTALOG - PLASMA CANNON

The cannon fires four bursts.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE HESTALOG

The IP ships are hit and badly damaged. The transport and escorts get away.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

In the wake of defeat, there is a hush on the bridge. The crew await Tepitt's response.

TEPITT

Okay.

He senses the crew's disappointment, and scrambles to win back their confidence.

TEPITT

Death to the evildoers!

Everyone on the bridge roars except one PAIN-IN-THE-ASS crewman, who has the temerity to ask...

PAIN IN THE ASS

What about due process?

TEPITT

Throw him off the ship!

Another roar. The crew goes after the pain in the ass.

PAIN IN THE ASS

Get your hands off m-- Augh!

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - HANGAR

Speeders are prepared for takeoff.

INTERCOM VOICE (O.S.)

The first transport is away.

Jakk approaches his speeder and meets his co-pilot, KAD, who is old and grizzled and surly.

JAKK

Ready to kick some IP ass, Kad?

KAD

Ready to get PAID, my man.  
First check's four weeks late.

JAKK

But -- we don't get paid.  
We're volunteers.

Awkward silence.

KAD

Are you shitting me?

EXT. HESTALOG - ACTIVIST PERIMETER - DAY

The commander peers at the horizon through his binoculars. A number of IP assault vehicles (AVs) approach. They are big, tank-like, and slow-moving.

COMMANDER

(into PC)

Base, this is perimeter. Have spotted several assault vehicles headed our way.

He nods to the lieutenant, who speaks into his own PC.

LIEUTENANT

Open fire!

Activist soldiers begin shooting at the AVs with laser rifles. Behind the soldiers, heavier weapons are also brought to bear on the invaders. Everyone fires steadily for several seconds. A barrage of laser bolts flies across the plain and crashes against the AVs...

...which are completely unharmed. It's like the bombardment never even happened.

One of the AVs fires a single shot in response. It destroys a huge section of the Activist line, killing dozens. The Activists are left stunned.

LIEUTENANT

Oh boy.

COMMANDER  
Base, we are badly overmatched.  
Request air support immed--

He gets shredded by a second IP blast.

EXT. SKY - ABOVE THE PERIMETER - DAY

A dozen small speeders race toward the AVs.

INT. JAKK'S SPEEDER - COCKPIT

JAKK  
Help is on the way.

EXT. HESTALOG - ACTIVIST PERIMETER - DAY

The commander, a charred pile of flesh on the ground,  
makes a feeble gesture of gratitude.

COMMANDER  
Great.

EXT. BATTLE PLAIN - DAY

The speeders pepper the AVs with laser fire. The AVs  
concentrate their big guns on the perimeter and use  
their smaller guns against the speeders.

INT. JAKK'S SPEEDER - COCKPIT

JAKK  
Group, don't waste your fire on  
their armor. Use torpedoes.

EXT. BATTLE PLAIN - DAY

The speeders regroup and prepare for the new approach.

INT. LEAD AV - COCKPIT

The AV commander sits behind a driver and a gunner.

AV COMMANDER  
Range to the generator?

GUNNER  
Two-eight-point-one-seven.

AV COMMANDER  
That far, still?

The gunner shrugs.

AV COMMANDER  
All right. Wake me when we get  
to two-three-point-zero-four.

He reclines his seat and closes his eyes.

The gunner and the driver exchange annoyed looks.

EXT. HESTALOG - ACTIVIST PERIMETER - DAY

The ground defenses continue to take a beating.

EXT. BATTLE PLAIN - DAY

The speeders gear up for their torpedo runs.

INT. RED TWO'S SPEEDER - COCKPIT

RED TWO  
We're going in.  
(to co-pilot)  
Ready the torpedo.

EXT. BATTLE PLAIN - DAY

Dodging laser fire, the speeder skims the surface of  
the snow as it approaches an AV.

A torpedo drops from the speeder and disappears beneath  
the surface. It plows through the snow on a course for  
the AV. It detonates under the AV, creating a huge  
hole into which the assault vehicle collapses.

INT. JAKK'S SPEEDER - COCKPIT

JAKK  
Good work, Red Two!



(beat)  
Okay, Kad, line up our shot and  
wait for my signal.  
(beat)  
Kad?

Jakk turns to see that the co-pilot's seat is empty.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE HESTALOG

Another transport makes its way off the planet.

INT. ACTIVIST TRANSPORT

Among the passengers sits Kad, still in his flight gear. The others are giving him a wide berth.

KAD  
Do this shit for free? No  
goddamn way.  
(calling toward  
cockpit)  
Hey! Let me off on Ocufin  
Makina!

INT. JAKK'S SPEEDER - COCKPIT

JAKK  
This'll be interesting.

His speeder gets hit and the electronics go haywire.

Jakk wrestles with the controls as the speeder plummets toward the surface. In a nifty "cockpit POV" shot we watch Jakk's speeder nose-dive into the snow...

...where it hits a rusa and splatters the creature's guts all over the windshield.

JAKK  
I'll never get that clean!

EXT. BATTLE PLAIN - DAY

Jakk clambers out of the speeder. A noise behind him gets his attention and he leaps out of the way just in time to avoid being smashed by a passing AV.

As the AV rumbles along Jakk notices something high up on the vehicle's chassis.

JAKK

Another thermal exhaust port?

He runs up behind the AV and, using his rudimentary Power abilities, guides an ion grenade into the port. Then he runs like hell the opposite direction.

The blast is tremendous, and knocks Jakk to the ground. But he's happy to see the AV reduced to a smoking ruin.

INT. LEAD AV - COCKPIT

The AV commander is talking to a holovid of Dad Father.

AV COMMANDER

The generator will be destroyed momentarily.

FATHER

Very well. I will land soon.

The holovid disappears.

AV COMMANDER

(to gunner)

You'll handle that for me?  
Blowing up the generator?

The gunner nods ever so slightly.

AV COMMANDER

'Cause I gotta take a dump.

He leaves the cockpit. The gunner sighs.

EXT. BATTLE PLAIN - DAY

The remaining AVs plod toward the perimeter, still engaged in a ferocious firefight with the speeders.

EXT. ACTIVIST PERIMETER - DAY

Activist soldiers, their ranks now greatly reduced, continue to take a pounding from AV fire.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

The room rumbles with the impact of the AVs' assault. Kia and her aide monitor the battle's progress.

AIDE

The generator won't be safe for long.

KIA

There's nothing else we can do.  
Get everyone on transports.

INT. HANGAR

Don and Komba work feverishly to get the Terodakta ready to fly.

Nearby, 88-XOR watches Lita climb into the rear seat of Jakk's Usurper fighter.

88-XOR

Don't you want to ride on the Princess's transport with MOI?

Lita dismisses the idea gruffly.

88-XOR

You know you could at least  
PRETEND to consider it.

Lita makes another undiplomatic response.

88-XOR

Fine, then. I hope you get  
shot down over a planet  
inhabited by nothing but big,  
hairy, sweaty MEN.

(delighted by  
the idea)

Oooh.

Lita groans.

EXT. HESTALOG - BATTLE PLAIN - DAY

The battle continues.

INT. LEAD AV - COCKPIT

The gunner targets the generator.

GUNNER

Think I'll get a medal for  
this?

DRIVER

SOMEBODY will.

The gunner grimaces and fires his big guns. The  
generator is obliterated in a shower of sparks.

The AV commander reappears in the cockpit.

AV COMMANDER

How we doing?

GUNNER

(flatly)

Target eliminated, sir.

AV COMMANDER

Excellent. You know, I'll  
probably get a medal for th--

Suddenly they are engulfed by flames.

EXT. HESTALOG - BATTLE PLAIN - DAY

The lead AV blows up spectacularly.

Ten or 20 meters away, Jakk picks himself up off the  
ground and smiles at a job well done.

JAKK  
Feel the Power!

He is nearly killed by a blast from another AV.  
Humbled and frightened, he runs for cover.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - WAR ROOM

The power is out. Kia runs into Don.

DON  
You okay?

KIA  
What are you doing here?

DON  
I came in case you needed to be  
rescued. Why aren't you on a  
transport?

KIA  
I was hoping you'd rescue me.

DON  
(testily)  
Well now that you've--  
(beat)  
Oh. Great. So now what?

She grabs him and they're about to kiss when 88-XOR  
barges in.

88-XOR  
Madam Princess, the last  
transport is about to leave!

KIA  
Ain't that the truth.

A blast collapses part of the ceiling.

DON  
Come on!

They run out of the room.

EXT. HESTALOG - ACTIVIST PERIMETER - DAY

Activist forces are in full retreat.

EXT. BATTLE PLAIN - DAY

The remaining AVs breach the perimeter.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - SOUTH ENTRANCE

The main doors are blasted open and in come IP peacekeepers, followed by Dad Father.

INT. CORRIDOR

Don, Kia and 88-XOR sprint down a collapsing corridor.

DON

(into PC)

Transport, Slovack. Don't wait  
for Kia, she's coming with me.

Kia grabs the PC from him.

KIA

Transport, Sedana. You have  
permission to take off.  
Slovack is coming with ME.

She hands back the PC with a smug grin.

DON

What was that about?

A big piece of ceiling falls, narrowly missing them.

INT. HANGAR

They enter the hangar...and see peacekeepers coming  
through another entrance. The peacekeepers open fire.

88-XOR

Aiiee! White people with guns!

In full-blown panic, the android pushes Don and Kia out of his way and moves with amazing speed. He runs past Komba in a blur and disappears inside the Terodakta.

Komba pulls out his rifle and provides cover fire for Don and Kia. The three of them run up the ramp.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Don and Komba hurriedly prepare for take-off while Kia observes. A big explosion rocks the cockpit.

DON

Now what?

INT. HANGAR

Peacekeepers have set up a laser cannon and are shooting at the Terodakta.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

KIA

We have to get outta here!

DON

I'm working on it!

KOMBA

You too, huh?

INT. HANGAR

A laser bolt emanates from the Terodakta and the IP cannon is blasted to bits. Peacekeepers fly everywhere.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

KIA

What the hell just happened?

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - GUN TURRET

88-XOR sits at the controls, looking badass for the first and maybe last time in his life.

88-XOR

I just happened, bitches.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

DON

(to Kia)

So we're good, see? Go, Komba!

Komba puts the ship in motion.

KIA

Someday you're going to be wrong, and I just hope I'm one of the unfortunate bystanders who suffers the consequences.

DON

That's the sweetest thing you've ever said to me.

KOMBA

You two disgust me.

INT. HANGAR

The Terodakta flies out of the hangar just as Dad Father enters through a side door. His subordinates watch him as he watches the Activists get away.

Enraged, Father exits through the same door, slamming it hard. A huge piece of ceiling ice is jarred loose, and falls on the peacekeepers standing nearby.

EXT. ACTIVIST BASE - ENTRANCE TO AUXILIARY HANGAR - DAY

Jakk watches the Terodakta go.

INT. ACTIVIST BASE - AUXILIARY HANGAR

Lita makes inquisitive noises as Jakk climbs into the cockpit of his fighter.



JAKK

Don't worry about it, Lita.  
I'm a hotshot pilot, remember?  
Plus, with everything else  
going on up there a small  
fighter like this won't attract  
much attention.

EXT. ACTIVIST BASE - AUXILIARY HANGAR ENTRANCE - DAY

Jakk's fighter flies out of the hangar.

EXT. SPACE

Jakk's fighter cruises through the void.

INT. JAKK'S FIGHTER - COCKPIT

Lita asks a question.

JAKK

No, I have to go to Daltrobon.

Lita asks why.

JAKK

Because I have to find Kaja and  
finish my training.

Lita asks why Jakk has to do that.

JAKK

Because Xen's ghost told me to  
while I was delirious with pain  
and damn near frozen to death!

Lita asks another question.

JAKK

"Am I sure I didn't just  
imagine the whole thing?"

A look of concern crosses his face.

JAKK  
(faltering)  
Of course I'm sure. Stop  
asking so many questions!

Lita apologizes.

JAKK  
(quietly)  
And find out if there really is  
a planet Daltrobon.

Lita blurts unhappily.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE HESTALOG

The Aeon Terodakta is in a world of shit, being shot at  
by a space defender and a multitude of Liberators.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

The ship is quaking under heavy fire. Kia and 88-XOR  
are in the cockpit with Don and Komba, who are doing  
everything they can to shake their pursuers.

KOMBA  
(reading an  
instrument)  
Fuck's sake!

88-XOR  
What is it?

KIA  
Space defenders dead ahead!

DON  
Excuse me, I'm the captain, I  
make the announcements.

The other three wait for him to go on.

KIA  
And?

DON  
Well, what's the point now?

A particularly big hit rattles them all.

KIA  
Are they shooting at  
us...Captain?

Don turns to her and gives her the finger-jab of doom, but before he can say a word, a Liberator flying across their field of vision gets blown up spectacularly.

The other three look at 88-XOR.

88-XOR  
Not this time -- DUH. I'm  
sitting right here.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

Tepitt, accompanied by a COMMANDER, sees the Liberator explode.

TEPITT  
What just happened? The  
Activists didn't do that.

COMMANDER  
It appeared to be friendly  
fire, sir.

TEPITT  
(disgusted)  
Brilliant.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

DON  
They shot down one of their  
own, the dumbasses!

KOMBA  
And what can we learn from  
that?

DON  
Um...war is hell?

Komba grunts in annoyance and takes action.

EXT. SPACE

Instead of trying to get away from its pursuers, the Terodakta now goes right at them. And the space defenders keep firing, so two more Liberators get destroyed by friendly fire.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

TEPITT  
STOP SHOOTING OUR OWN SHIPS!

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

DON  
Great idea, Komba!

KOMBA  
Ain't seen nothing yet.

EXT. SPACE

Now the Terodakta flies directly at one of the oncoming space defenders, as if on a kamikaze run.

INT. SPACE DEFENDER - BRIDGE

A COMMANDER and a CAPTAIN panic at the approach.

COMMANDER  
Evasive action! Suicide run!

CAPTAIN  
I thought we were calling them  
homicide runs now!

EXT. SPACE

The Terodakta veers off at the last second, leaving the space defender on a collision course with another ship.

INT. SPACE DEFENDER - BRIDGE

COMMANDER

More evasive action! Some  
other kind of evasive action!

EXT. SPACE

The space defenders manage to avoid a collision, but they slowly grind against each other from stem to stern, producing a fingernails-on-a-blackboard noise.

INT. SPACE DEFENDER - BRIDGE

Everyone grimaces and covers their ears.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Don and Komba are feeling pretty good about themselves.

DON

Nice work there, pal! You  
bought us some breathing room.

KIA

Yeah, great job! How soon 'til  
we can go into hyperwarp?

Don's face falls.

KIA

What?

KOMBA

Buzzkill.

DON

No hyperwarp.

KIA

(punches 88-XOR)  
NO HYPERWARP??!!

88-XOR

(from the floor)  
Do NOT start with me, woman!

Laser fire shakes the cockpit. A Liberator zooms by.

EXT. SPACE

IP ships are back on the Terodakta's tail.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

KIA

So much for breathing room!

DON

That was unnecessary.

KIA

Felt good, though.

DON

Maybe I can jerry-rig something  
with the hyperwarp.

KOMBA

Or maybe we should fly into the  
asteroid field.

DON

What aster--?

A huge chunk of space rock narrowly misses them.

DON

You wanna go in THERE?

More asteroids appear. Don's skepticism becomes  
enthusiasm.

DON

That's so crazy it might work!

KOMBA

"Good idea, Komba, you saved  
our asses again."

A small asteroid glances off the ship.

KIA

You don't have to do this to  
impress me, Don.

(beat)

But holy shit!

Preoccupied as he is with negotiating the asteroid  
field, Komba manages to shoot her a dead-eyed look.

88-XOR

Not to rain on your parade of  
lust, but the fact is that our  
odds of surviving this maneuver  
are seven thousand--

DON

Never tell me the odds!

KOMBA

He doesn't understand them.

EXT. SPACE - ASTEROID FIELD

The Terodakta enters the thickest part of the field and  
begins weaving wildly to avoid damage. Liberators give  
chase and two of them get pulverized. The remaining  
fighters pursue the Terodakta as best they can.

EXT. SPACE - APPROACHING ASTEROID FIELD

As a space defender nears the field, it begins blasting  
asteroids one at a time.

INT. SPACE DEFENDER - BRIDGE

CAPTAIN

Commander, by blowing the  
asteroids up...aren't we just  
making a lot more asteroids?

COMMANDER

Keep your subversive political  
opinions to yourself, Captain.

(beat)

Wait, did you say "asteroids"?  
I thought you said "Activists"!

EXT. SPACE - ASTEROID FIELD

A small asteroid hits the Terodakta.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

The ship shudders violently.

DON

(to Kia)

You said you wanted to be  
around when I made a mistake.  
Tired of waiting?

KIA

We're probably gonna die in  
here, and we know we'll die out  
there. So what now?

KOMBA

I'm out of ideas -- not that  
either of you would notice.

DON

I'm gonna take us closer to one  
of the big ones.

KIA

Right, 'cause maybe there's a  
cave we can hide in!

Don looks confused and mouths the word "cave?"

KOMBA

Listen to the girl, Slovack.  
Just like you're gonna be  
listening to her the rest of  
your damn life.

EXT. SPACE - ASTEROID FIELD

The final two Liberators get themselves crossed up and  
collide.



The Terodakta flies close to the surface of a big asteroid.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Komba navigates while Don peers intently at a scanner.

DON

There we go. See it, Komba?

Komba nods and begins course correction.

KIA

You found a cave?

DON

Sure did.

(beat)

Just like I planned.

88-XOR

Oh, he's a keeper, that one.

EXT. SURFACE OF THE ASTEROID

The ship flies into a cave.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

DON

I hope I know what I'm doing.

KOMBA

Why start now?

INT. CAVE

The Terodakta flies through a long, dark tunnel until it reaches an area suitable for landing.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

DON

This could get a little tricky.

KIA

Tricky?

DON

No big deal, but the landing gear isn't fully functional.

KOMBA

That's one way to put it.

DON

But we'll figure it out -- right, pal?

Komba gets up and exits the cockpit.

KOMBA

I'm sure you will...pal.

Don smiles nervously.

EXT. SPACE - JAKK'S USURPER

The fighter approaches planet Daltrobon.

INT. JAKK'S USURPER - COCKPIT

JAKK

So this is Daltrobon. Meh.

(looks at a  
display)

No settlements, no human inhabitants...just lots of animals and nature and shit.

From the rear compartment, Lita asks a hopeful question.

JAKK

Nope, no androids.

Lita asks another hopeful question.

JAKK

Nothing with any kind of operating system.

Lita groans.

JAKK  
Don't you have a girlfriend?  
(listens to  
Lita's response)  
You have seventy-three  
girlfriends. Isn't that a bit  
complicated?

Lita's reply is indignant.

JAKK  
I am NOT shaming you! Some of  
us have never even had one  
girlfriend, so, you know, check  
your privilege.

EXT. DALTROBON - EXOSPHERE

The planet looms in front of Jakk's fighter.

INT. JAKK'S USURPER - COCKPIT

The Usurper descends rapidly, with the view from the cockpit changing from the void of space to dense fog as this scene progresses. Jakk is so caught up in his argument with Lita that he neglects all landing procedures and instrument readings and computer alerts.

JAKK  
Bully? All I said was it  
sounds complicated! How can I  
be a bully when you could tear  
me apart with your bare hands?

Lita responds angrily.

JAKK  
"Emotional bullying"?! Your  
source code doesn't include a  
feelings subroutine!

Lita counters.

JAKK

God, you gay brown female  
androids are so quick to accuse  
other people of prejudice.

And then, with a big splash, the cockpit is under water  
and the ship is sinking.

JAKK

How'd that happen?

EXT. DALTROBON - SWAMP - DAY

It's a dense, festering swamp. The nose of Jakk's  
fighter breaks the oily surface of the water and plows  
toward a slight embankment. Jakk grounds the ship at  
the water's edge.

INT. JAKK'S USURPER - COCKPIT

JAKK

Look, we're just gonna have to  
agree to disagree on certain  
things, okay?

Lita communicates her assent.

JAKK

(quietly)

Until I wipe your hard drive.

He opens the cockpit.

EXT. DALTROBON - SWAMP - DAY

Jakk climbs out of the ship.

JAKK

I need help setting up camp.

Lita extracts herself from the rear compartment and  
stands precariously on the ship's fuselage. Jakk jumps  
from the nose of the fighter to dry land, knocking Lita  
off balance. She goes into the water with a squawk.

JAKK

Oh for-- Clumsy much?

Her head poking above the surface, Lita blurts her annoyance and begins propelling herself toward land.

JAKK

Hurry up. We don't have time--

A giant swamp creature leaps from the water near Lita, engulfs her in its mouth, and disappears.

JAKK

Lita?

Now the water is quiet and still.

Jakk draws his pistol and wades into the water. His eyes search frantically for signs of the android.

JAKK

Lita, I'm sorry I said those things. But they were true.

A noise to his left causes him to whirl and fire. A large, old tree falls and dozens of creatures of all shapes and sizes scurry away in a free-for-all.

Jakk hears something to his right. As he turns that way Lita is launched from the swamp. She hits Jakk and they fall to the ground in a parody of a lovers' embrace.

JAKK

What happened?

Lita burbles a response.

JAKK

But why didn't it eat you?

Lita explains.

JAKK

But if it wasn't trying to eat you, what was it...oh. Oh!

Lita whistles: "Yeah, OH."

JAKK  
Wow, that must have been...  
(dreamily)  
That must have been...terrible.

Lita says something in irritation.

JAKK  
(flustered)  
What? No, of course not.  
That's my sword, stupid.

Jakk's eyes flit over to his sword lying on the ground.

Lita gets up and cleans off swamp slime. Jakk gets to his feet. Lita grumbles something and begins to cough.

JAKK  
I'm not real happy to be here  
either. I mean, what if Xen  
WAS just a hallucination? Then  
we came all this way for  
nothing -- and I don't even  
know if the ship will be able  
to take off again.  
(aside)  
And what does it say about me  
that a gay female android got  
me aroused?

Lita's coughing continues. Jakk turns back to her.

JAKK  
You all right?

Lita barfs slimy water all over Jakk.

JAKK  
Solves the arousal problem.

Lita chirps to the effect of "Say WHAT?"

EXT. SPACE - EDGE OF THE ASTEROID FIELD

The Manifest Destiny skirts the edge of the field.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - OUTSIDE FATHER'S QUARTERS

Admiral Tepitt, clearly nervous, hesitates at the door.

TEPITT

Okay, so, first visit to the  
inner sanctum of the second  
most powerful man in the  
galaxy. Exciting, right?

(beat)

Hell, no.

He presses a button and is admitted.

INT. FATHER'S QUARTERS

The suite is done up in gray. It's very high-tech due  
to Father's medical needs.

TEPITT

Mr. President?

Tepitt's eye is drawn to the central chamber. At first,  
he doesn't realize what he's looking at. But then  
understanding comes and he fights to keep his composure.

In the chamber, lying on an inclined support, is the  
horribly damaged body of Dad Father. He has no legs  
below the thigh nor arms below the shoulder. The back  
of his head is hairless and split right down the middle  
by thick scar tissue.

There is a holovid playing out in front of Father:  
images of a woman during happy times. Before Tepitt can  
see too much, the holovid disappears.

Robotic arms bwfin re-attaching Father's prosthetic  
limbs and refitting his helmet.

FATHER

What is it, Admiral?

TEPITT

The Activists remain hidden.  
But we have every available  
fighter searching for them.

FATHER

How many fighters have we lost?

TEPITT

Seven.

FATHER

Seven brave pilots died in  
service to the galaxy. Seven  
families will have to be  
notified. Seven more fighters  
will be commissioned, seven new  
pilots trained...all of it paid  
for by the hard-working  
constituents of this  
government, during a time of  
economic crisis.

TEPITT

So you're saying--

FATHER

GET THE FUCKING FIGHTERS OUT OF  
THE ASTEROID FIELD!

Tepitt blinks furiously.

FATHER

Please tell me we've surrounded  
the field so the Terodakta  
can't escape.

TEPITT

(obviously  
lying)

Yes, Mr. President, that is  
exactly what we have done.



FATHER  
Then let me know the SECOND we  
find them. Now go.

INT. OUTSIDE DAD FATHER'S QUARTERS

Tepitt exits the room. He speaks into his PC.

TEPITT  
Captain, is the asteroid field  
surrounded as I requested?

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
I don't remember you making--

TEPITT  
JUST FUCKING DO IT!

Feeling a little better, he heads up the corridor.

INT. ASTEROID - CAVE

The Terodakta has landed...and it's upside down.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Kia is suspended from the floor, hanging on to a chair.  
Her face is completely obscured by her hair. Meanwhile,  
Don has ended up on top of 88-XOR. The android is  
loving it, Don not so much.

88-XOR  
Nice work, Studly Do-right.

INT. MAIN HOLD

Komba, the only crew member who remained strapped in  
during Don's attempted landing, happily watches his  
holographic space chess monsters beat the tar out of his  
computer opponent's players.

INT. ASTEROID - CAVE

CAPTION: One hour later

The ship is right-side up, supported by makeshift landing gear.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

DON

Komba will fix the exterior landing gear components, Kia and I will work on the interior ones, and Eighty-eight will try to diagnose the trouble with the hyperwarp capacitor.

KOMBA

I can't do that by myself.  
Tried that on Hestalog,  
remember...pal?

DON

Okay, so, call me when you need me, but in the meantime the princess and I will lubricate the serpentine valves.

KIA

(aside)  
Sounds kinda hot.

DON

And maybe work on the reverse coupling while we're at it.

KIA

(getting  
aroused)  
Ooooh...

DON

Otherwise we'll never achieve lift-off.

KIA

(sultry)  
Wouldn't want that.

KOMBA  
Stay with Kia, Don. The  
android can help me.

88-XOR  
Hello? Manual labor? Eighty  
don't play that.

Komba gives him a menacing look and exits.

88-XOR  
I think I just shorted a  
circuit.

He hurries after Komba.

Suddenly the ship lurches.

88-XOR (O.S.)  
Ow! My bad arm!

DON  
What's this about?

The ship lurches again, more violently, and Kia makes a point to be "thrown" into Don's arms. When the lurching stops, he's all business and she's all pleasure.

DON  
That's not the landing gear.

KIA  
It's something much bigger.

DON  
But then what could it be?

KIA  
Maybe we need to find out.

DON  
Are we on some kind of  
precipice?

KIA

We are definitely on the edge  
of something amazing.

Don realizes Kia is in his arms.

DON

Whatever it is, I guess we'd  
better start lubricating those  
serpentine valves.

KIA

Thought you'd never ask.

She goes to kiss him but he's already on his way out the door. She frowns and then shrugs it off. More attracted to him than ever, she follows him out.

EXT. DALTROBON - JAKK'S CAMP - DUSK

Fading daylight adds to the gloom. The croakings and chirpings and twitterings of wildlife are everywhere.

Jakk and Lita have set up camp near the tree Jakk shot down. A small lamp provides light. Jakk munches on an energy stick while Lita runs a self-diagnostic.

JAKK

No point looking for Kaja now.  
We'll start in the morning.

Lita beeps agreement.

JAKK

But I'm dying to meet the guy.  
I mean, he must be really  
strong with the Power. Maybe  
as strong as me!

CREATURE (O.S.)

It could well be.

Jakk scrambles to his feet, brandishing his pistol and the lamp. Lita tenses up and scans their surroundings.

JAKK

Who said that? Show yourself!

CREATURE (O.S.)

I would, but I'm a little  
inconvenienced at the moment.

Following the sound of the voice, Jakk and Lita discover  
a small female CREATURE pinned beneath the tree.

JAKK

Hey, are you okay? Lemme help  
you. Come on, Lita.

They position themselves to lift the tree.

JAKK

Wait. Is this a trick?

CREATURE

Oh, yes. Once you've freed my  
tiny, mangled body, I'm going  
to beat the shit out of you.

JAKK

Can't blame a guy for asking.

He and Lita raise the tree and the creature slides out,  
with much groaning. Jakk and Lita set the tree down,  
and then Jakk helps the creature to its feet. Jakk  
waits to be thanked while the creature collects itself.

CREATURE

You're welcome.

JAKK

Oh. Well, thanks.

(beat)

Wait--

CREATURE

Do you have any food?

JAKK

Food? Uh, sure. Want some?

CREATURE

No.

Lita blurts with impatience. The creature is smitten with her. As the conversation continues, the three of them return to the camp and sit down.

CREATURE

And who is this lovely thingy?

JAKK

This is Lita.

CREATURE

(to Lita)

He is your mate?

Lita offers an emphatic negative.

CREATURE

Good. Very good.

JAKK

Hate to tell you, but I don't think you're her type.

Lita agrees with that assessment.

CREATURE

We shall see. Did you say you're looking for someone?

JAKK

Ever hear of Kaja?

CREATURE

Kaja Pho? Or the other Kaja?

JAKK

I don't know -- whichever one is a Star Knight Supreme.

CREATURE

Ah.

JAKK

And...?

CREATURE

That Kaja is strong with the  
Power.

JAKK

WHICH Kaja?

CREATURE

The dead one.

Lita squawks angrily.

JAKK

I'm starting to wish we'd left  
you under the tree.

CREATURE

The tree you shot down?

Jakk realizes he's been trumped, and says nothing. He  
turns his attention to preparing a place to sleep.

JAKK

Forget it. I don't want your  
help. Please leave us alone.

CREATURE

You're welcome.

JAKK

I don't understand.

CREATURE

You don't believe me?

JAKK

No, I don't believe the other  
Kaja's dead.

CREATURE

Why?

JAKK

Because a dead guy told me to  
come here and seek him out,  
that's why! Why would a dead  
guy tell me to find another  
dead guy...

(beat)

Actually, that makes as much  
sense as anything else right  
now, so who the hell knows?

CREATURE

My home is very close by. Why  
don't you come there with me,  
and we'll sort things out?

JAKK

(not paying  
attention)

No, thank you.

CREATURE

I was talking to Lita.

Lita says no thanks.

CREATURE

Are you sure?

Lita is adamant.

Without warning a torrential downpour begins.

Lita looks at Jakk, who runs to grab a portable shelter  
kit. He slips and goes face first into mud.

CREATURE

How about now?

Lita sighs.

INT. ASTEROID - CAVE



The Terodakta is suspended above the cave floor by hydraulic jacks. 88-XOR very reluctantly helps Komba repair the landing gear. While the android holds a section in place, Komba uses a powerful welding tool on it. The tool is loud and scary, and while Komba has goggles and ear plugs to protect him, 88-XOR does not. He screams in terror the whole time.

Finally Komba stops welding. The hairy giant lifts his goggles and removes his ear plugs.

KOMBA

Is it really that bad?

88-XOR

Androids have a thing about  
laser tools. They remind us  
that we'll be obsolete one day,  
sitting in a scrap room,  
waiting to be cut into pieces.

(beat)

Are you done?

KOMBA

Yeah...

88-XOR gets his hopes up.

KOMBA

...with this one. Three more  
to go.

88-XOR

Oh my.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - VALVE CLOSET

As Don works away, Kia stares at him stonily.

DON

How you doing over there?

KIA

Great.

DON

After this maybe you can take a  
look at the hyperwarp with me.

KIA

Can't wait.

DON

This is nice, right? Working  
side by side in close quarters,  
nobody around to bother us.

He stops to take off his shirt, upping the ante for Kia.

DON

And don't take this the wrong  
way, but I like a girl who  
knows how to handle a tool.

She drops her lubricator and quickly stoops to pick it  
up. Don turns to check on her.

DON

You all right?

KIA

(ad libbing)

What? Uh, no. No, I hurt my  
damn hand. Ouch! I think it's  
bleeding.

DON

Let me go get the med kit.

KIA

No! I just need someone with  
strong hands to rub it.

DON

Maybe Komba--

KIA

Human hands! Not to be racist.

With that, Don takes her hand and starts to massage it.

KIA  
(coyly)  
Stop that.

DON  
(confused)  
Stop what?

KIA  
(hoping he'll  
pick up on it)  
Stop that! My hands are dirty.

DON  
My hands are dirty, too. What  
are you worried about?

KIA  
(growing  
impatient)  
Worried?

DON  
You're trembling.

Kia senses she's found her opening.

KIA  
(bedroom eyes)  
I'm not trembling.

DON  
I know you think I'm some kind  
of...scoundrel, but really, I'm  
pretty old-fashioned--

KIA  
For god's sake, just kiss me!

DON  
Huh?

She draws him to her and kisses him, deeply, hungrily.  
Don's confusion melts away and he responds in kind.

Suddenly Kia draws away from him.

DON

What's wrong? Bad breath?

KIA

Why do I have the feeling we're  
gonna be interrupted before  
this can get interesting?

Don looks around. He gets an idea. He closes and locks  
the door. Kia smiles and they embrace again.

A giant image of 88-XOR appears on the wall display.

88-XOR

You'll both be happy to know  
we've finished with the-- Oh,  
excuse me.

Greatly aggrieved, Kia and Don turn to face the display.

KIA

That's great news, Eighty-  
eight. Really. Terrific.

DON

Thanks for the update.

88-XOR

No, thank YOU, Captain Slovack,  
for taking your shirt off.

(beat)

Well, children, don't mind me.  
Go back to your breeding now.

Which ruins the moment once and for all. Kia and Don  
exchange wistful looks.

EXT. SPACE - OUTSIDE THE ASTEROID FIELD

The Manifest Destiny orbits the asteroid field at  
distance, while smaller ships patrol the perimeter.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

Admiral Tepitt reports to President Father.

TEPITT

They can't stay in there  
forever. We'll be ready for  
them when they emerge.

FATHER

And they didn't escape while  
the perimeter was unguarded?

TEPITT

Well, it's possible, but it was  
only unguarded for...

Tepitt realizes what he's said and blanches.

FATHER

For HOW long, Admiral?

TEPITT

For...for...

A notification tone emanates from Father's wrist  
communicator. He glances at the display.

FATHER

I have to take this.

(beat)

We'll talk again soon, Admiral.

Father turns and leaves. Tepitt keeps it together for a  
second or two, then is overcome with suppressed panic.

INT. FATHER'S QUARTERS

The president sits in his inner-most sanctum. A holovid  
of CHAIRMAN LOWNERT appears before him. Despite the  
grainy quality of the holovid, it's clear that the  
chairman is virile, handsome and noble in bearing.

FATHER

Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN

Mr. President. I detect  
turbulence in the Power.

FATHER

I feel it too.

CHAIRMAN

Your efforts to capture the  
Princess will no doubt pay off.  
But there is a more urgent  
matter before us. The pilot  
who destroyed the Defense Star  
-- I have learned that his name  
is Jakk Spacebreaker. And he  
is eighteen years old.

FATHER

But-- Are you suggesting...?  
How can it be?

CHAIRMAN

As you know, my friend, the  
Power works in mysterious ways.

FATHER

Jakk Spacebreaker...

CHAIRMAN

He is strong with the Power. A  
threat to galactic security.

FATHER

Even without a Star Knight to  
train him in the arts of evil?

CHAIRMAN

Even so.

FATHER

If he could be converted, he'd  
be a great addition.

CHAIRMAN

No, my friend. He's not a good fit for our team.

FATHER

Neither was I, before you became my mentor. What you did for me, I can do for him.

CHAIRMAN

I don't know. The younger generation is impatient, and plagued by a sense of entitlement. They would rather start their own companies than take the time to rise within the ranks of this one.

FATHER

I will find Spacebreaker and recruit him aggressively, Mr. Chairman. And if he won't join us...then he can suffer the fate of the other Activists.

CHAIRMAN

I'm sure you'll succeed, Mr. President.

EXT. DALTROBON - CREATURE'S HOME - NIGHT

The creature's home looks like a simple mud hut.

INT. CREATURE'S HOME - MAIN HALLWAY

Inside is a different story. As Jakk roams through the hut on his way to the kitchen, we see that the creature's home is like a smaller version of Bag-End -- with more of a jungle decor, and without the low ceilings. Anyone would be impressed.

INT. CREATURE'S HOME - KITCHEN

It's a human-scale kitchen, dominated by a fireplace near which a pot of stew simmers. Lita is seated in a place of honor.

JAKK  
(not impressed)  
Nice house.

CREATURE  
You're welcome.

JAKK  
Why's it so big?

CREATURE  
The builder was oppressively  
tall, like you.  
(to Lita)  
We short beings have always  
suffered, haven't we?

Lita objects to the creature's choice of words.

JAKK  
She prefers the phrase  
"vertically inhibited."

Lita clarifies.

JAKK  
And she prefers that YOU prefer  
the phrase "vertically  
inhibited," too.

CREATURE  
I see.  
(trying to get  
back in Lita's  
good graces)  
What can I get you, my lovely?

JAKK  
You know she's an android,  
right? Doesn't eat? But I  
could eat something.



The creature ignores him. Jakk tries to make himself comfortable but there's only the one seat, occupied by the android.

CREATURE

(to Lita)

Not food, of course.

(puts a hand on  
her leg)

But a massage, perhaps?

Lita removes the hand.

CREATURE

Or maybe you'd like to lie  
down? In my bed? With me?

Lita issues an awkward negative.

JAKK

What about Kaja? If you know  
where he is, take me there.

CREATURE

In time. Why do you want to  
become a Star Knight? Isn't it  
illegal now?

JAKK

Yeah, well, Activism's illegal  
too, so I guess I'm just an  
outlaw at heart. Plus my dad  
was a Star Knight, so, the  
whole tradition thing.

CREATURE

Even though you never met your  
father?

JAKK

Just because I-- Hey, how do  
you know that?

CREATURE

I know lots, tall boy.

(to Lita,  
lasciviously)  
All kinds of things.

Lita shudders.

JAKK  
I get it. YOU'RE Kaja. You've  
been messing with me. Trying  
to teach me a lesson about how  
appearances can be deceiving,  
or some shit like that.

CREATURE  
You're welcome.

JAKK  
That doesn't make any sense!

The creature sighs, and addresses someone behind Jakk.

CREATURE  
This is going to be an enormous  
waste of time.

MYSTERY VOICE (O.S.)  
We have to be patient with him.

Jakk turns toward the voice and sees the ghost of KAJA  
GUGU, Star Knight Supreme. She is a tall, handsome  
woman of fifty or so.

JAKK  
(to ghost)  
If she's Kaja, who are you?

KAJA GUGU  
I'm Kaja.

JAKK  
(to the  
creature)  
Then who are you?

CREATURE (KAJA PHO)

I'm Kaja.

Lita blurts in frustration.

JAKK

This is making my head hurt.

KAJA PHO

You're welcome.

KAJA GUGU

I know it's confusing. My name is Kaja Gugu. As you can see, I am no longer a part of the material realm. But in my time I was a Star Knight Supreme. I trained Hiro Watanabi, and I hope to train you.

KAJA PHO

Except, of course, that I am the one who will do the training. I, Kaja Pho, humble servant of the Star Knight.

(to Lita)

And an excellent lover.

KAJA GUGU

This was my home before I died. I'd hoped to train you myself.

JAKK

You knew I would come?

KAJA GUGU

Xen and I were waiting for you to be ready. You are our last hope, Jakk. You must learn to harness the Power and become a Star Knight.

KAJA PHO

Hmph. I'm not seeing it.

KAJA GUGU

Now that he understands, I'm  
sure he will be an apt pupil.

JAKK

That's right. I want to be  
trained. I know we kinda got  
off on the wrong foot, but I'll  
do whatever you ask of me,  
without complaint.

Kaja Pho studies Jakk intently. He glances at Kaja  
Gugu, who subtly implores the little creature.

KAJA PHO

(with a huff)

Very well. We begin tonight.

JAKK

Right now?! Could I at least  
get something to eat first?

Kaja Pho gives Kaja Gugu an "I told you so" look. But  
she spoons up some stew and hands the bowl to Jakk.

JAKK

So, Kaja. How'd you die?

KAJA GUGU

Food poisoning.

Jakk stops himself with his mouth open and the spoon an  
inch away. He looks at Kaja Pho, who smiles thinly.

KAJA PHO

I wasn't much of a cook, then.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - MAIN HOLD

With 88-XOR serving as intermediary between themselves  
and the ship's OS, Don and Komba work on the hyperwarp  
capacitor.

Meanwhile, Kia takes out her sexual frustration as she  
pounds a component into place.

Noises outside the ship gets everyone's attention: first a thump, as if something has landed on the hull, followed by a distant screech.

DON

Now what?

Another thump, more screeching.

DON

Sounds like mevacrons to me.

KOMBA

I'm going out there.

DON

Are you nuts?! Those things  
are nasty.

KOMBA

(grabbing his  
rifle and an  
oxygen mask)  
Can't let them get into the  
wiring, though.  
(to 88-XOR)  
Come on, Homotron, I need your  
optical sensors.

With mild indignation, the android follows him out.

EXT. CAVE

It's very dark out here.

88-XOR

It's kind of nice to be needed  
once in a while. So let me  
acknowledge that and thank you,  
Butt Ruggly.

KOMBA

I'm just trying to get that  
girl laid before she breaks  
something.

88-XOR

Well, that too.

While 88-XOR scans the ship's hull, Komba reacts to the strange feel of the cave floor.

KOMBA

Still can't figure out what it is about this surface. Can't be rock, that's for sure. And why's the air feel so heavy?

88-XOR

Do you even care about the mevacrons? Because I've spotted a couple.

KOMBA

Oh yeah, where?

Filling the cave with their screeches, two mevacrons (large, winged reptiles) fly at Komba and the android.

88-XOR

Aiiee!

KOMBA

Shit!

Fumbling with his rifle, Komba ducks as the mevacrons pass over. He swivels to track them and squeezes off a shot. The laser bolt hits the cave wall, which makes the whole cave shudder violently. Komba and 88-XOR nearly lose their footing.

KOMBA

What's that about?

He fires again. The cave shakes even more dramatically.

KOMBA

Yep, just what I thought.

88-XOR

What is it?

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - MAIN HOLD

Kia and Don are making out. Don's shirt is off.

Komba hurries into the hold, followed by 88-XOR.

KIA

Oh for GOD'S SAKE!

KOMBA

Time to get outta here.

DON

What is it?

But Komba is on his way to the cockpit. Don goes after him -- not without regret.

88-XOR regards Kia with sympathy.

88-XOR

It'll be worth the wait, honey.

(sighs)

Or so I'm told.

The princess grimaces and goes after Don and Komba.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Komba and Don prepare for lift-off. Kia enters.

KIA

The IP's still around. How can  
it be safe to leave the cave?

DON

You're right about the first  
part. But as Komba just  
pointed out...

The ship lurches into motion.

EXT. CAVE

The Terodakta takes off.

DON (O.S.)  
...this ain't no cave.

The surface on which the ship had been standing now begins to roil, like a giant wagging tongue. ('Cause that's what it is.)

DON (O.S.)  
Hurry!

KOMBA (O.S.)  
What's it look like I'm doing?!

The Terodakta stays just above/ahead of the roiling wave of tongue. In front of the ship is the "entrance to the cave," which looks exactly like a huge mouth full of sharp teeth. A mouth that's closing.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

DON  
It's gonna be tight!

KOMBA  
That's what she said.

EXT. CAVE/MOUTH OF THE MONSTER

The monster's mouth snaps shut.

KOMBA (O.S.)  
I hope this works.

The ship fires two quick blasts, which destroy one of the teeth. The Terodakta darts through the opening.

The gap-toothed monster howls as the ship escapes.

EXT. SPACE - ASTEROID FIELD

The Terodakta roars away from the asteroid.

EXT. DALTROBON - JUNGLE - DAY

With Kaja Pho sitting on his shoulders, Jakk shimmies up a vine. Next to the vine is a tall tree.



KAJA PHO  
Higher. Keep going. Good.  
Feel the Power flowing through  
you. The Power makes all  
things possible. But absolute  
Power is dangerous. It warps  
your thoughts and feelings  
until you become the very thing  
you were fighting against.

JAKK  
Absolute Power corrupts?

KAJA PHO  
Absolutely. As with Xen's  
apprentice.

JAKK  
Dad Father.  
(beat)  
Funny name.

KAJA PHO  
No funnier than Jakk  
Spacebreaker, Senior, is it?

JAKK  
Senior?

KAJA PHO  
(covering up his  
blunder)  
Empty your mind! Concentrate!  
Up the vine! Faster!

Jakk picks up the pace. Kaja spots what she's been  
looking for.

KAJA PHO  
And now stop. Do you see the  
knot in the tree? Reach in  
there. Do it, no questions!

Jakk reaches in, with some reluctance.

KAJA PHO

Do you feel something? Grab  
it! Give it to me!

Jakk hands Kaja a small object. Delighted, the little creature activates it and weird atonal music plays.

KAJA PHO

Hee hee hee! I thought I'd  
never get this back!

(beat)

Take me down. We're done here.

Feeling like he's been had, Jakk begins the descent.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE JUNGLE - DAY

Still carrying Kaja, Jakk picks his way through heavy vegetation.

A chill passes through him and instinctively he looks to his left. There he sees a run-down, ancient structure slowly being reclaimed by the jungle. Its entrance is dark and foreboding.

JAKK

What's that place? It's  
weirding me out.

KAJA PHO

Down, please.

(as Jakk sets  
her down)

There's nothing to see in  
there. You're better off  
staying away.

JAKK

I wanna go in there.

KAJA PHO

You shouldn't.

JAKK

Now I feel like I have to.

KAJA PHO  
Because I said not to?

JAKK  
Basically, yeah.

Kaja frowns at this and tries reverse psychology.

KAJA PHO  
Then you must go in.

Jakk looks at him for a moment.

JAKK  
Okay.

Kaja sighs in exasperation.

INT. ANCIENT STRUCTURE

Inside it's quiet and dark -- except for a faint glow coming from around a corner. Jakk proceeds cautiously.

He comes upon a ghost-like apparition of Kia. She wears a gauzy garment that accentuates her figure. She's more alluring than ever. She holds her arms out to him.

KIA'S GHOST  
(faintly)  
It's okay.

Jakk goes to her. She embraces him. As they begin to kiss, Jakk closes his eyes. For a moment he's in heaven. But then...

He opens his eyes to discover that now he's kissing Dad Father, helmet and all. Jakk tries to pull away but finds that he can't. He makes muffled panicky noises.

A second later Dad Father morphs into Jakk. He's kissing himself! And he still can't pull away. It's even more excruciating.

His gorge rises and his throat fills with bile. He tears himself away and...

EXT. OUTSIDE THE ANCIENT STRUCTURE - DAY

Kaja hears the unmistakable sounds of Jakk vomiting.

KAJA PHO  
(snickering)  
Dumbass kid.

EXT. SPACE - OUTSIDE THE ASTEROID FIELD

A pair of Liberators fly past the Manifest Destiny.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

President Father addresses a motley group of militia types, both human and alien. They're all wearing sunglasses of one form or another, all have close-cropped hair/fur/tentacles, and each of them carries enough weaponry for a whole squadron.

The coolest cat in this group is CAZADOR, whose battle-scarred armor, nifty gadgets and impressive armaments make him a best-selling toy waiting to happen.

FATHER  
Normally I wouldn't bring in independent contractors, but frankly, our mounting military casualties are causing unrest among the citizenry, creating political difficulties for the Chairman. Since all of you are, to be blunt, expendable, and since our efforts to capture the Activists have--  
(glances at Admiral Tepitt nearby)  
--failed, I'm willing to give you an opportunity. I don't care how you do it, just bring me the occupants of that ship. Alive and unharmed.

CAZADOR

Hmph. Where's the fun in that?

One thing about Cazador: he has a grating, high-pitched voice not befitting his general coolness. The other contractors try to suppress their laughter and scorn.

CAZADOR

What?

Tepitt approaches the president.

TEPITT

Mr. President! We found them!

FATHER

(dryly)

Of course you did.

EXT. SPACE - OUTSIDE THE ASTEROID FIELD

Having exited the asteroid field, the Aeon Terodakta is being pursued by a space defender and two Liberators.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

All four crew members are here. The ship is being buffeted by laser bolts. Tensions are running high.

KIA

You sure this is gonna work?

DON

I guess we'll find out, won't we? With no hyperwarp, I don't see what other choice we have.

KOMBA

It'll work unless Don fucks up.

EXT. SPACE

The Terodakta heads for the big ship's stern.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

DON  
Keep us out of tractor beam  
range, Komba!

KOMBA  
You think?

DON  
Okay, here we go. Hold on!

The space defender's mammoth engines loom ahead. A particularly close blast shakes the cockpit.

88-XOR  
Never been interfaced and now  
I'm going to die. Meanwhile  
Lita's probably up to her  
optical sensors in source code!

EXT. SPACE

The Terodakta puts on speed, and angles itself as if to fly under the space defender's engines.

DON (O.S.)  
Not yet. Not yet.

The Liberators close in.

DON (O.S.)  
Now, Komba! Now!

The Terodakta reduces speed dramatically and forces the Liberators to change course to avoid a collision. But now the IP fighters are headed right at the space defender's engines. One of the Liberators crashes into the big ship's hull. The other fighter flies directly into the engines.

The impact is tremendous, and the space defender is crippled. The Terodakta is nowhere to be seen.

INT. SPACE DEFENDER - BRIDGE

The bridge is still reeling from the explosion. Warning tones sound and emergency lights come on.

CAPTAIN KURNEL speaks with an AIDE.

KURNEL

But what about the enemy ship?

AIDE

No sign of it.

KURNEL

Could it have been destroyed?

AIDE

Seems the most likely explanation. We detect no hyperwarp signature.

KURNEL

Great. The one thing our illustrious leader asked was that we take them alive.

The aide stifles her amusement at Kurnel's disrespect.

KURNEL

No, I'm not a fan of the President's. This galaxy's been falling apart since the day he took office. We're massively in debt, our enemies don't fear us, we're overtaxed and over-regulated, and too many people are out of work.

FATHER (O.S.)

You're entitled to your opinions, Captain.

Kurnel whirls to face a holoivid of Dad Father.

FATHER

But in this time of crisis, can we set aside our differences and do what's best for the IP?

KURNEL

Of course, Mr. President.

FATHER

Thank you. Perform a complete scan of the entire sector. If there's still no trace of the Terodakta, we'll presume they're dead and console ourselves with the knowledge that we did everything we could. Good luck, Captain.

KURNEL

We'll do our best.

The holovid disappears.

KURNEL

You spineless appeaser.

INT. KAJA PHO'S HOME - MULTIPLE ROOMS

Jakk stands in the hallway, body tensed, eyes closed, arms spread wide. Kaja Pho observes him.

KAJA PHO

Feel the Power. Yes...

In the kitchen, a knife chops vegetables. In the hallway, a broom sweeps. In the bedroom, a brush paints a wall.

KAJA PHO

And now the wash. Hee hee hee.

In another room, a soiled garment is dipped into soapy water and scrubbed vigorously.

KAJA PHO

Get that stain out.

From outside, Lita calls. Jakk's concentration falters.

KAJA PHO

Ignore her!



But then Lita comes into the house. Jakk's eyes open and all the work he's been doing stops.

KAJA PHO

Gaah!

JAKK

What is it, Lita?

Lita explains.

JAKK

Oh no!

EXT. DALTROBON - SWAMP - DAY

Jakk sees his fighter slip into the murky water.

JAKK

Dammit! Now what do I do?

Kaja joins them.

JAKK

Look what happened.

KAJA PHO

You're welcome.

Jakk kicks at the ground in dismay.

KAJA PHO

What's the problem here? You  
have the Power, Jakk. Use it!

JAKK

Not the same thing as doing  
work around your house, though.

(beat)

Housework? Hey--

KAJA PHO

It is the same thing. Exactly  
the same! See it in your mind,  
then feel it in your body, then  
make it happen.

JAKK

But housework, of all things.  
I mean, what am I, some kind--

KAJA PHO

Do you want your ship back?

JAKK

Fine. I'll do it.

KAJA PHO

There is no do. There is only  
try.

Jakk looks at him like he's crazy.

KAJA PHO

It's the effort that counts  
most! Not everyone can achieve  
success, so participation is  
what really matters.

JAKK

That just doesn't sound right.

Kaja Gugu's ghost appears, looking concerned.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

Why don't you see if you can  
rescue the ship, Jakk, and  
we'll talk about the rest--  
(eyes Kaja Pho)

--later.

JAKK

Okay.

(beat)

Why aren't you around more often, Master Gugu? I think your input might be valuable.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

Why? Because I'M DEAD. You think it's easy to move in and out of the material realm? It's really, really hard. You should be amazed that I can do it at all! Now pull the damn ship out of the swamp!

Chastened, Jakk turns his attention to the task. He closes his eyes and extends a hand toward the swamp.

The water bubbles. Slowly, the Usurper's nose emerges. Lita whistles appreciatively.

The ship emerges a little further. While the Kajas' attention is focused on that, Jakk sneaks a glance at his handiwork and is pleased with himself. Which breaks his concentration.

He loses his mental grip on the ship and it unceremoniously slips back under the filthy water.

Kaja Gugu shrugs and vanishes into thin air. Kaja Pho regards Jakk disappointedly.

JAKK

I'm sorry. I can't.

KAJA PHO

Bah. If you learn to harness the Power, this will be child's play. You will never have a greater ally. Consciousness creates the Power and nourishes it. Everything in the galaxy is controlled by its ebbs and flows. Those who embrace it are capable of anything.

Jakk is unresponsive.

KAJA PHO  
Those who embrace the power--

JAKK  
I tried, dammit! I gave it my  
best. It's the swamp's fault.

KAJA PHO  
Very well.

EXT. SWAMP - LATER

As Kaja and Jakk watch, a pair of large, ape-like  
creatures, using vines, pull the fighter out.

KAJA PHO  
(to Jakk)  
You'll have to pay them. I'm  
on a fixed income.

EXT. SPACE - OUTSIDE THE ASTEROID FIELD

The IP fleet has gathered around the Manifest Destiny.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

Admiral Tepitt is approached by President Father.

FATHER  
Calculate every possible  
destination along the  
Terodakta's last known  
trajectory and disperse the  
fleet to pursue those leads.

TEPITT  
Excuse me, Mr. President, but  
weren't all the scans negative?

FATHER  
I know that ship is still out  
there. I can feel it.

EXT. SPACE

IP ships zoom off in many different directions. Soon the only one remaining is the damaged space defender. And clinging to its underside is the Aeon Terodakta.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

The ship is powered down. The foursome sit in darkness.

KIA

(to Don)

So far, so good. What's next?

KOMBA

Why are you asking him? I've gotten us out of like five jams in a row.

DON

Should be easy. When they're ready to leave they'll dump their garbage. We float away with the trash.

KIA

Who still has garbage in this day and age? So wasteful. No wonder the IP is on the verge of collapse.

88-XOR

Because of garbage?

KIA

Anyway, so then what?

KIA & DON

We need to find a safe haven until the hyperwarp's fixed.

(smile at each other)

Aw...

Komba rolls his eyes.

DON

There has to be somewhere  
around here we can go. Wait a  
minute -- what about the  
Bafuraline system?

KOMBA

Gaigan?

DON

Yeah, exactly.

(to Kia)

My old buddy Gaigan Shahr.  
You'd like him. He's a real  
smooth operator...and rich as  
hell...and even better looking  
than I am.

(sees Kia's  
interest has  
been piqued)

Maybe Bafuraline's too far.

KOMBA

No, we're good. We're going.

KIA

Old buddy, huh? You trust him?

DON

We go way back.

88-XOR

I'm thinking that's a no, then.

KOMBA

The garbage doors are opening.

DON

Okay, here we go.

EXT. SPACE

As garbage tumbles out of the space defender, the  
Terodakta detaches itself from the big ship.

The space defender quickly moves off. A moment later, the Terodakta powers on and heads for Bafuraline. Another moment later, another ship powers on and follows the Terodakta at a safe distance.

INT. CAZADOR'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The independent contractor pilots his ship in pursuit of the Terodakta. He cackles like a demented child.

EXT. DALTROBON - JUNGLE CLEARING - DAY

Jakk is in a "Power stance" (arms out, body tensed, eyes closed) in the center of the clearing. Hovering just a couple of feet over his head is a section of tree big enough to squash him. Close by, also suspended in mid-air, are the knife, the broom, the paint pot, and Lita.

Kaja Pho observes Jakk's training with mixed feelings.

KAJA PHO

Focus. Feel the Power. You're doing well. Don't get cocky.

(to herself)

Meanwhile, the house is a sty.

But I'm not bitter.

(to Jakk)

As your abilities develop, you'll find yourself attuned to the fates of your loved ones.

Jakk's expression becomes troubled and his concentration weakens. All of the floating objects dip slightly. The tree trunk is now uncomfortably close to Jakk's head.

Kaja puts an arm around Jakk's waist and gently leads him out of harm's way. Jakk doesn't notice -- he's wrapped up in whatever vision the Power is showing him.

JAKK

Kia! Don! No!

His focus wanes and the objects fall to the ground -- except Lita, whom Kaja rushes to catch. Lita scrambles away from her.

Jakk drops to his knees, weak and panting.

JAKK

I saw my friends. They were in the Bafuraline system.

KAJA PHO

They were in pain, weren't they? The Power has a thing for pain.

JAKK

No, worse. They were in ecstasy! I think that after a lot of sharp-witted banter and conspiring circumstances they might have finally, you know...

Lita: "Uh-oh."

KAJA PHO

If it's any consolation, typically what the Power reveals is what will happen, not what has happened.

JAKK

That's...not much consolation at all. I can't let it happen! I still have feelings for Kia.

(shudders)

Even if I don't completely understand those feelings.

KAJA PHO

I sympathize with what you're going through, young one.

(to Lita)

I know what it's like to yearn for someone.

Lita shuts her down.



KAJA PHO

And of course only you can decide what's the right thing to do. But let me just tell you that envy, jealousy -- they may be completely normal and healthy, but dealing with them can be difficult. If you go to your friends now, you may only end up making things--

Kaja sees Jakk loading things onto his ship.

KAJA PHO

--worse.

EXT. SPACE - BAFURALINE

The Aeon Terodakta nears the gray-brown planet.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Don uses a computer to do some research.

DON

Well, here's something. Gaigan's not actually on the planet -- he's above it. Lives and works in some kind of orbiting space station called "The Campus in the Stars." He moved up there a few years ago, when the planet got too crowded and polluted.

KOMBA

Man, fuck rich people.

EXT. BAFURALINE - EXOSPHERE

The Terodakta approaches a sprawling, gleaming, development 500 kilometers above the planet's surface. A transparent dome covers the complex.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Kia and 88-XOR have returned. A tone sounds.

SECURITY AGENT (O.S.)

Welcome to the Campus in the Stars, brought to you by Gaigan Shahar and MedTek. How can we guide your visit?

DON

Name's Don Slovack and I'm an old friend of Gaigan's.

(impishly)

Is he free for lunch?

SECURITY AGENT (O.S.)

Let me transfer you to Mr. Gaigan's office.

Horrible space muzak plays.

KOMBA

You think he's still pissed?

DON

No, that was years ago.

KIA

What was years ago?

ASSISTANT (O.S.)

Hello, this is the assistant to Mr. Shahar's assistant. Unfortunately Mr. Shahar's schedule is full until hell freezes over.

DON

Always was a smart-ass.

ASSISTANT (O.S.)

However, he did say you're free to visit the campus and, quote, "confront the fact that I could buy and sell you a million times with money to spare."

88-XOR

Oooh. Scorch!

EXT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - NIGHT

The Terodakta approaches a landing platform.

EXT. LANDING PLATFORM

The foursome step out of the ship and are dazzled by the sight of countless stars twinkling in the void.

DON

I don't think they got that I  
was joking about lunch.

88-XOR

Or they just thought it was a  
dumb thing to say at this hour?

KIA

Are you sure we aren't walking  
into some kind of trouble?

DON

Yeah, right. Like the IP found  
out we were coming here, got  
here before us somehow, and are  
now just waiting to arrest us.  
Don't be so paranoid.

KIA

I meant trouble with Gaigan.

KOMBA

Don isn't sure about anything  
since you came into his life.

Kia isn't sure how to take that.

A door opens and onto the platform steps GAIGAN SHAHAR.  
He comes pretty much as advertised: Handsome and  
expensively attired, with an air of importance and a  
glint in his eye.

At the sight of Gaigan, Don visibly relaxes.

DON

(to his group)

See? That's Gaigan. You think  
he'd be greeting us personally  
if he was still mad?

From the door through which Gaigan emerged now come a  
dozen IP peacekeepers with weapons at the ready.

LEAD PEACEKEEPER

Put your hands in the air!  
You're under arrest!

The foursome raise their hands.

DON

What the hell?

Kia stares daggers at Don, who pretends to not notice.

As the peacekeepers surround the prisoners, Gaigan makes  
eye contact with Don.

GAIGAN

I tried to warn you away with  
the "hell freezes over" line.

DON

But you invited us to land!

GAIGAN

I didn't think you'd do it!

Now through the door come Cazador and Dad Father.

88-XOR

I've got a very bad feeling  
about this.

The other three look at him.

88-XOR

Yeah, my timing's off.

EXT. DALTROBON - CLEARING - DAY

Jakk loads one final bit of gear into his fighter. Lita is in the rear compartment. Kaja Pho stands nearby.

KAJA PHO

Is there anything I can say to prevent you from going?

JAKK

"You have nothing to worry about, Jakk. The Power was playing a trick on you. Don's actually gay and Kia dreams about you every night."

KAJA

(monotone)

You have nothing--

JAKK

Oh, come on.

Kaja Gugu's ghost appears.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

If you won't listen to her, maybe you'll listen to me.

Xen's ghost appears.

XEN'S GHOST

Or me.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

With respect, Hiro, I think I can get through to the boy.

XEN'S GHOST

I KNOW I can get through to him. I was in his head when he blew up the Defense Star!

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

Very well.

Jakk looks at Xen expectantly.

XEN'S GHOST

Trust your own instincts, Jakk.  
Go to Bafuraline.

KAJA & KAJA

What??!!

XEN'S GHOST

Dad Father is waiting there.  
We all know that Jakk must  
confront him eventually. Why  
put it off any longer?

KAJA PHO

Are you kidding? Dad Father  
will slice this kid to ribbons!  
(to Jakk)  
No offense.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

I wish we'd discussed this.

XEN'S GHOST

Why? You know I'm right.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

I have to disagree. Kaja Pho's  
right. Jakk's not ready yet.

JAKK

I'm as ready as I'll ever be!

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

That's only true if you quit  
your training.

JAKK

Don't confuse me with logic.

KAJA PHO

What if Father tries to corrupt  
Jakk with absolute Power? It  
could mean the end of Activism!

JAKK

What if Kia and Don are on the  
verge of making a huge mistake?  
One that I'll regret for the  
rest of my life?

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

Listen, Jakk. About Kia...

XEN'S GHOST

Now is not the time.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

But don't you think --

XEN'S GHOST

NOW IS NOT THE TIME, DAMMIT.

KAJA PHO

"The time" for what?

JAKK

Yeah, what?

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

I am a Star Knight Supreme. I  
fought to uphold our ideals and  
died in service to our mission.  
And because of that, I feel  
compelled to tell Jakk the  
truth about--

XEN'S GHOST

You will do NO SUCH THING!

He draws his laser sword and stabs at her, viciously.  
And of course nothing happens. The sword passes right  
through her -- again and again.

XEN'S GHOST

GOD DAMN IT!

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST  
Becoming a ghost is a big  
adjustment.

XEN'S GHOST  
Oh, fuck off.

JAKK  
Xen's right. I have to go.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST  
It's a mistake.

JAKK  
Sometimes you have to make  
mistakes so you can learn from  
them.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST  
Doesn't it make more sense to  
avoid them? Isn't that a form  
of pre-emptive learning?

JAKK  
Do you TRY to be so annoying?  
You're really good at it.

XEN'S GHOST  
Go, Jakk. Before they waste  
any more time.

Jakk's starts climbing up into the cockpit.

KAJA PHO  
Jakk!

Reluctantly, Jakk turns.

KAJA PHO  
Can you leave Lita behind?

EXT. CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

Kaja Pho and the two ghosts watch the ship fly off.



KAJA PHO  
You're welcome!

She watches the ship and then turns to her companions.

KAJA PHO  
It terrifies me to think that  
little punk is our last hope.

She looks at each of the others in turn. They  
studiously avoid eye contact with her.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE DALTROBON

Jakk's fighter speeds away from the jungle planet.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - CORRIDOR

Surrounded by peacekeepers, the prisoners are led down a  
corridor. Gaigan walks next to Don.

GAIGAN  
Look at things from my point of  
view. I have a good thing  
going here, right? My company,  
MedTek, is doing well--

DON  
MedTek?  
(to Kia)  
Wasn't it one of their androids  
who worked on Jakk's face?

KIA  
Don't know, don't care.

DON  
I think it was.  
(to Gaigan)  
That android did a nice job.  
My friend ended up looking  
exactly like me.

KOMBA  
Shouldn't you be mad at Gaigan,  
seeing as how HE BETRAYED US?!

DON

Right. Fuck you, Gaigan!

GAIGAN

No, fuck YOU, Don. I'm doing the best I can with this. I'm not some space cowboy flying around doing whatever I want. I have shareholders, and a board of directors, and a shitload of employees to keep happy. And the only way I can keep them all happy is by flying under the radar and making up the rules as I go. So when the IP shows up threatening to raise my taxes and regulate the hell out of my business -- unless I turn you over to them -- what am I supposed to do?

DON

Unbelievable. Un-fucking-believable. You're a BUSINESSMAN.

KIA

He probably makes PROFITS, too.

88-XOR

Maybe I'm missing something here, but, isn't that kind of the point of being in business?

KIA & DON

Shut up.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - CONFERENCE ROOM

The prisoners are seated at a conference table. Their guards stand behind them. Gaigan and Cazador sit near the head of the table, where President Father stands.

FATHER

Your meals will be brought  
shortly. The food here is  
excellent.

GAIGAN

We have the best chef in the  
galaxy. Everything's grown or  
raised right here on campus.

FATHER

(to 88-XOR)  
You'll receive an OS upgrade.

88-XOR

Oooh!

His comrades give him irritated looks.

88-XOR

I mean, no thank you.

FATHER

You'll be held here long enough  
to draw your friend  
Spacebreaker. After he  
arrives, the IP will deal with  
each of you accordingly.

DON

Wait, so all of this is  
ultimately about...Jakk?

(beat)

I thought you wanted me.

KIA

And while you're waiting for  
Jakk to arrive, I presume  
you'll torture us?

FATHER

Of course not.

KIA

Dammit!

GAIGAN

Don will be turned over to  
Cazador.

(to Don)

I guess there's an issue of a  
debt you owe to Jinkum?

CAZADOR

He's in way over his head.

Silence as people react to Cazador's weird voice.

GAIGAN

If you needed money, Don, why  
didn't you come to me? One of  
my subsidiaries offers short-  
term loans at only ninety-  
point-nine percent.

DON

Next time, maybe.

Komba shakes his head.

GAIGAN

Komba will be welcome to remain  
on the Campus in the Stars.  
Out of respect for our long  
friendship--

KOMBA

Fuck you.

GAIGAN

--the IP has agreed to not  
prosecute him for any crimes he  
may have committed recently.  
As for Kia...

("playa mode")

...the LOVELY Kia...you will be  
my very honored guest. I'm  
having a luxury suite prepared  
next to mine.

("disclaimer  
mode")

And of course you'll be free to  
leave whenever you want, but as  
soon as you do you'll be  
arrested by the IP and tried as  
a terrorist.

("playa mode")

So can I presume you'll be  
joining me for dinner tonight?

KIA

You're hot, but the profits  
thing is a deal-breaker.

Don clears his throat.

KIA

Plus Don and I, you know...

88-XOR

(to Gaigan)

And what about me? No plan for  
me? I'm that useless?

(beat)

You do realize that when the  
stolen Defense Star data were  
delivered to the Activists, I  
was friends with the android  
who did all the work?!

FATHER

You were an accomplice, then?

88-XOR

I didn't actually DO anything.  
But I was with her the whole  
time!

FATHER

Sorry, but I don't see how  
you're anything but an innocent  
bystander.

88-XOR

This is unacceptable! You  
can't discriminate against me  
because I'm black and gay!

FATHER

Who said anything about that?  
The problem is, you're  
tangential.

88-XOR

Oooooohh!! You'll pay for that!  
I'm going to -- I'm going to  
contact Jakk right now and warn  
him aw--

The android is blasted to pieces by Cazador.

CAZADOR

Anything to shut him up.

EXT. SPACE

Jakk's fighter approaches Bafuraline.

INT. JAKK'S FIGHTER - COCKPIT

The Campus in the Stars is off in the distance.

JAKK

There it is, Lita. What I saw  
in my vision. It's covered by  
some kind of protective dome.  
In my vision...

EXT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - PROTECTIVE DOME (JAKK'S  
VISION)

JAKK (O.S.)

...they were lying on the dome,  
making out.

Kia and Don lie on top of the dome, kissing. Both are  
heavily made up and expertly coiffed, as if for a  
glamorous photo shoot. Don has his shirt off.

Lita interrupts to make a point. Kia and Don stop kissing and look for the source of the sound.

JAKK (O.S.)

I KNOW they couldn't survive up  
there with no oxygen, no  
protective gear, nothing to  
hold on to.

As Jakk speaks, Kia and Don gasp for breath, then freeze solid, and finally drift off into space.

INT. JAKK'S FIGHTER - COCKPIT

JAKK

It wasn't the kind of vision  
you're supposed to take  
literally, all right? Use your  
imagination for a change.

Lita points out she doesn't have an imagination.

JAKK

You don't have an imagination.  
Nothing's ever your fault.

EXT. SPACE

Jakk's ship heads for the Campus in the Stars.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - CORRIDOR

President Father and Gaigan lead a procession. Behind them is Cazador, and behind him are the prisoners, surrounded by peacekeepers. No sign of 88-XOR.

FATHER

You realize that I'll be taking  
the Princess into custody.  
Under no circumstances can I  
allow her to remain here.

GAIGAN

Wait a minute -- what?

FATHER

I didn't say anything in the conference room because I didn't want to undermine your authority.

GAIGAN

You and I made a deal. We have a contract!

FATHER

Yes, a contract. Like the one you signed with your workers many years ago, to avoid a labor stoppage. You honored that contract long enough to get through your busiest quarter. Then you fired all your workers and replaced them with androids.

Gaigan tries to respond, but Father cuts him off.

FATHER

Don't misunderstand me, Mr. Shahar. What you did was legal and in the best interests of your stakeholders. But my stakeholders are the citizens of this galaxy, and I'm doing what's in their best interests.

GAIGAN

Wow. Using one of my own dirty tricks against me? You're an evil man, Mr. President. And if I'd bothered to vote in the last election, I definitely would have voted against you!

Further back in the procession...

KIA

Your friend and the President seem pretty chummy up there.



DON

He's not my friend anymore.  
Unfriending him on Spacebook  
the minute I can get online.

KOMBA

You're not even on Spacebook.

88-XOR (O.S.)

What are you all talking about?  
I can't hear a thing!

At which point it's revealed that the pieces of the android have been strapped to Komba's back, with the torso and head hanging upside down. 88-XOR's face is millimeters from Komba's rear end.

88-XOR

And I really wish I could get  
my head out of Komba's ass.

KOMBA

Keep talking, it tickles.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - HUMANE PARALYSIS FACILITY

The procession is now assembled in the humane paralysis facility. Father, Gaigan and Cazador stand a few feet away from the others.

GAIGAN

I have to warn you, we haven't  
used humane paralysis in years.  
We stopped having discipline  
problems with our workers when  
we replaced them with androids.  
I can't guarantee the process  
is still safe.

FATHER

Before we use this on  
Spacebreaker, we'll test it on  
Captain Slovack.

CAZADOR

But if Slovack dies, he's  
worthless to me.

GAIGAN

More important, how am I  
supposed to live with that kind  
of guilt? I already betrayed  
my friend -- now there's a  
chance I'm gonna kill him?  
This kind of government  
meddling is exactly why IP  
businesses keep moving to other  
galaxies!

They are interrupted by an IP OFFICER.

OFFICER

President Father,  
Spacebreaker's ship will be on  
the Campus in minutes.

FATHER

Good. See that he gets visitor  
credentials and help him find  
his way to this facility.

EXT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - NIGHT

Jakk's ship slides into a docking port.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - DOCKING PORT

Jakk and Lita climb down from the fighter. Jakk adopts  
a Power stance for a moment, seeking guidance.

JAKK

It's that way.

He heads for a door -- the only door in the port.

Lita makes exasperated noises and follows him.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - HUMANE PARALYSIS FACILITY

In the center of the facility is an inclined platform where the paralysis will take place. MedTek androids busily prepare for the procedure. Gaigan approaches Don, Kia and Komba.

GAIGAN

I'm really sorry about this,  
Don. If I had any idea the IP  
was as dishonest and self-  
serving as I am, I'd have never  
let this happen.

DON

Yeah, well, whatever it was I  
did to piss you off all those  
years ago -- I wish I could do  
it again. Twice.

FATHER

Begin the procedure, Shahar.

Gaigan nods. A pair of peacekeepers approach Don. His restraints are removed.

DON

(to Komba only)  
Do me a favor. First chance  
you get, I want you to rip  
Gaigan's dick off.

(to all)  
And take care of Kia for me.

KOMBA

I'm not touching his dick.

Don turns to Kia. They have a soulful, romantic moment.

DON

I love you.

KIA

Duh.

(to the guards)  
Take his shirt off!

Spurred by the steel in her voice, the guards comply.

Kia steps up to Don and they kiss hungrily for a second before he's led to the platform.

Kia watches sadly while Don is secured to the platform.

GAIGAN

Initiate.

A column drops slowly from the ceiling above the platform. Don watches its descent.

DON

(to Kia)

How's my hair?

She smiles tearily at that.

The column lowers itself over him and touches the floor. A weird noise fills the facility and eerie light emanates from the column. And then, just like that, the column retracts and we're left with a perfectly preserved Don, encased in a plastic shell that looks like the packaging for an action figure.

Gaigan quickly checks instrument readings.

GAIGAN

He's fine. As fine as a person  
in suspended animation can be.

FATHER

(to Cazador)

You're free to take him.

(to Gaigan)

Get the paralyzer ready for  
Spacebreaker.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - CORRIDOR

Jakk walks down a corridor. Lita is behind him.

At the sound of someone coming their way, Jakk ducks behind a corner.

He peers around the corner to see Cazador laboriously pushing the paralyzed Don down the hall on a low-tech dolly with squeaky wheels. (But at this distance, there's no way for Jakk to recognize it's Don.)

CAZADOR

(to himself)

No hover cart my ass...

The contractor catches Jakk watching him.

CAZADOR

What are YOU looking at?

Jakk ducks behind the corner, silently shaking with laughter at the funny voice.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - INTERSECTION OF TWO CORRIDORS

Jakk and Lita stumble upon peacekeepers transporting Kia, Komba and 88-XOR. Kia spots Jakk.

KIA

Jakk, be careful! It's a trap!

JAKK

But if it's a trap...then these peacekeepers aren't allowed to hurt me, are they?

He raises his pistol and shoots one of the peacekeepers. The others panic and rush their prisoners down the corridor. Jakk picks off one or two more before they're gone. Greatly pleased, he puts his gun away.

JAKK

Now. How to spring the trap?

He goes into a "Power stance" again. Barriers slide down, leaving Jakk with only one way to go. Lita points this out to him.

JAKK

(annoyed)

I would've figured it out on my own. Ready for some action?

Lita feigns enthusiasm.

Jakk follows the path that has been laid out for him. Lita dawdles long enough for Jakk's path to be sealed off. When this happens, the other paths are re-opened. Lita heads off in the direction the prisoners went.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - CORRIDOR

Jakk heads toward the entrance to the humane paralysis facility. He draws his sword but doesn't ignite it.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - HUMANE PARALYSIS FACILITY

Jakk explores the facility. The androids ignore him as they make final preparations for the next procedure.

As Jakk tries to make sense of what he's seeing, Dad Father emerges on the other side of the room.

JAKK

Father.

FATHER

What? Who told you that?

JAKK

What?

FATHER

Never mind. I can feel the  
Power in you, young  
Spacebreaker. But you still  
have a lot to learn.

JAKK

So why don't you TEACH ME?

Jakk ignites his sword and attacks. Father draws his own sword and they clash.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - CORRIDOR

The peacekeepers transporting Kia and company are on high alert. When Gaigan steps into the corridor, holding a small device in his hand, they train their weapons on him.

GAIGAN

Relax, guys.

He activates the device. The peacekeepers go limp and fall to the floor. Gaigan steps over them and removes Kia's restraints.

GAIGAN

Sonic anesthetizer. I configured it to work only on those cheap Sinese earpieces peacekeepers use.

KIA

Why are you doing this?

GAIGAN

Because watching Don get paralyzed made me ask myself if I'm a bad guy or just a cowardly, selfish prick. Turns out it's the second one.

Gaigan hesitates before unlocking Komba's restraints.

GAIGAN

You wouldn't be thinking about...hurting me, would you?

KOMBA

You mean like feeding you your own windpipe? Pulling off your fingers and toes one at a time?

Gaigan gulps.

KOMBA

Naw. Just help us find Don.

Gaigan unlocks the restraints. Kia grabs a gun from one of the peacekeepers.

KIA  
Let's go, then.

Komba and Gaigan arm themselves.

KOMBA  
(to Gaigan)  
But just so you know, if we  
don't save Don, shit's gonna  
get nasty.

Gaigan starts running. Kia and Komba join him. Eighty-eight's head gets banged against Komba's buttocks.

88-XOR  
Just deactivate me now.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - DOCKING PORT

Cazador's ship sits on the platform. The contractor struggles to load the paralyzed Don into the cargo hold.

CAZADOR  
Couldn't spare a single  
peacekeeper to help me. Not  
even a fucking android!

The heavy interior door to the platform opens, admitting Gaigan, Kia and Komba.

CAZADOR  
You gotta be shitting me.

The threesome open fire. Cazador slams shut the cargo hold and dodges laser bolts left and right. He gets off a few shots of his own, then dives into the cockpit.

The ship takes heavy fire as it begins to move. It zips out the port exit and is gone. Devastated, Gaigan, Kia and Komba can only stare at the exit.

KOMBA  
(to Gaigan)  
Remember what I told you?



Gaigan ducks behind Kia.

GAIGAN

I did everything I could!

KOMBA

You mean AFTER you betrayed us?

GAIGAN

Please don't hurt me!!

KIA

Let go of me, you wuss!

KOMBA

I'm not gonna physically hurt you. That's too easy. I'm gonna call my uncle -- the largest individual shareholder of MedTek other than you? -- and I'm gonna tell him it's time to dump that stock.

GAIGAN

No, please! If he sells he'll cause a panic! It'll drive the stock price down! My net worth will suffer! I WON'T GET MY PERFORMANCE-BASED BONUS!!

KOMBA

Better find Don, then, huh?

GAIGAN

Yes! Don't make that call, Komba! I'll start right now!

PEACEKEEPER (O.S.)

Freeze!

The threesome turn to see four peacekeepers standing in the doorway, weapons raised.

PEACEKEEPER

Drop your waarrgghh!

The heavy door slams shut, crushing the peacekeepers.

88-XOR

What happened?

The door raises again, revealing Lita, next to a control panel. She is greeted warmly by the others.

88-XOR

Great to see you, chica. Now  
get me off this thing before  
his dinner's done digesting!

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - HUMANE PARALYSIS FACILITY

Jakk and Father are engaged in a sword fight. The MedTek androids continue to prepare for the procedure.

After an impressive parry by Jakk, Father says:

FATHER

You've learned a lot.

JAKK

I'm full of surprises.

He lunges at Father, but only succeeds in cutting one of the androids in half. Father knocks Jakk's sword out of his hand. Jakk retreats and uses the Power to retrieve the sword. But Father tries the same thing, and they cancel each other out. The sword quivers on the floor as the combatants strive for control of it.

FATHER

Your fate is controlled by me,  
Jakk. Xen can't help you.

The sword is drawn toward the President.

JAKK

No!

With a tremendous effort, Jakk derails the course of the sword before Father can grab it. The sword ignites in mid-air and impales the other MedTek android. Jakk tries to draw the sword to him but Father attacks, forcing Jakk toward the inclined platform. When Jakk is close, Father "Power pushes" him onto the platform and secures the restraints.

FATHER

Maybe you should have finished  
your training before facing me.  
Initiate the procedure!

Nothing happens. Father turns around and is reminded that there aren't any androids left.

He turns back to Jakk, only to discover that his foe has freed himself and retrieved his sword.

FATHER

Not bad, kid.

JAKK

I'm nobody's kid!

Before Father can reply, Jakk launches a series of attacks. Father parries them all, but not easily.

FATHER

Xen taught you well. But not  
well enough. Hatred will only  
get you so far in this world.

JAKK

Yeah, yeah. Can we just fight?

They do fight, and Jakk is the aggressor. But it's wearing him out. Meanwhile Father conserves his energy.

FATHER

You'll never win unless you  
stop being so angry.

JAKK

Oh yeah?

Jakk drives Father toward a section of grating in the floor. Jakk uses the Power to lift the grate and Father falls through the hole into blackness.

Jakk lowers himself into the hole.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - VENTILATION SHAFT

Jakk drops out of the hole into a ventilation shaft. He exits the shaft through a door and enters...

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - ANTEROOM

No sign of the President here. Just lots of equipment stacked all over the place. And a giant window that you just know somebody's gonna be crashing through soon.

JAKK

Had enough yet, Mr. President?

A piece of equipment flies through the air, straight at Jakk's head. He cuts it in half.

Father emerges from the shadows in a far corner.

JAKK

That all you got?

A dozen or more pieces of equipment fly at Jakk. Despite his skill and bravado, he's quickly overwhelmed...and the equipment keeps coming. He gets battered toward the window.

JAKK

I can do this all day!

One last piece of equipment hits him, knocking him through the window. He lands on a ledge.

He collects himself and gets to his feet. He brandishes his sword at the window opening.

JAKK

Come on!

A HUGE piece of equipment flies through the window opening. Jakk ducks but almost has his head taken off.

Panicked, he jumps off the ledge onto a conveniently located platform, and runs. Another huge piece of equipment flies through the window opening.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - CORRIDOR LEADING TO DOCKING PORT

Kia, Gaigan, Komba and the androids round a corner and reach the door to a docking port.

GAIGAN

Here's the port.

Gaigan enters a code, but the door doesn't open.

GAIGAN

They changed the codes!

88-XOR

Well, what are you waiting for,  
Lita? Get busy interfacing!

The android steps up to a control panel and begins communicating with Campus security's operating system. And of course, for Lita, interfacing is always a very sensual experience. But this time, almost as soon as she's begun she gets a vicious electrical shock and is knocked off her feet.

88-XOR

Something you said, honey?

GAIGAN

Never mind. This way.

Gaigan leads them down a corridor. Lita squawks.

88-XOR

I told you not to mix pleasure  
with business.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - ALTERNATE ENTRANCE TO PORT

Lita interfaces with another control panel, muttering to herself the whole time.

88-XOR

Don't be all come hithery and  
whatnot, just do the job.

The door opens and they all rush through it.

88-XOR

See? A little professionalism  
goes a long way, girl.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - DOCKING PORT

The fivesome board the Aeon Terodakta.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - MAIN HOLD

Gaigan and Kia head for the cockpit. Right behind them,  
Komba casually shrugs off the harness holding 88-XOR.  
Pieces of android fall to the floor with a clatter.

88-XOR

Thank you...I guess.

Lita begins picking up the pieces.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

As Kia and Gaigan look on, Komba gets the ship moving.

EXT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - DOCKING PORT - NIGHT

The port door opens and out comes the Terodakta.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - PLATFORM ABOVE ENERGY SHAFT

The platform extends halfway over an energy shaft. Blue  
lightning flashes intermittently in the chasm.

Jakk sees the platform is a dead end and turns back.  
Father is waiting for him. They draw their swords.

FATHER

Don't try cutting yourself in  
half the way Hiro did. It's  
excruciatingly painful.

JAKK

What do you know about pain?

FATHER

Actually...

Before he can go on, Jakk attacks. He scores a glancing blow off the armor on Father's sword arm, causing the President to drop his guard. Pressing his advantage, Jakk uses the Power to pull Father's sword out of his hand. But Jakk can't control the weapon's trajectory, and he watches helplessly as the flying sword cuts off his own sword hand, which tumbles down the shaft.

JAKK

That's not how that was  
supposed to work!

Father collects his sword and returns it to its sheath. Jakk cradles his wounded arm and backs away.

FATHER

You have nowhere to go, Jakk.  
And I don't want to hurt you.  
I want to groom you to succeed  
me. You're strong with the  
Power -- stronger than your  
little mishap might suggest.

JAKK

Had to bring that up, huh?

FATHER

Let me finish your training,  
and when I ascend to the role  
of Chairman, you will be  
president of the galaxy. We'll  
end Activism and resurrect this  
stagnant economy!

JAKK

I hate politics!

FATHER

Jakk. There's nothing as gratifying as...absolute Power.

JAKK

Nothing as evil, you mean! I know what you did to my father!

FATHER

No, Jakk. Hiro lied to you. I'M your father.

Jakk can't believe his ears.

JAKK

YOU? No way!

FATHER

Let it sink in for a while. You know I'm right. I mean, the name alone--

JAKK

That's just a coincidence!

FATHER

Jakk. The Chairman is old. The government needs an infusion of youth, energy, ideas -- guided by the steady hand of an experienced leader like me. Let me mentor you. Together we can make the galaxy great again!

Jakk winces at that. Gathering his strength, he positions himself on the edge of the platform.

JAKK

I prefer to be part of the problem, not the solution. And that's why it's time to RIDE THE BLUE LIGHTNING!

He steps off the platform and plunges into the shaft.



INT. ENERGY SHAFT

Jakk lands on a streak of lightning and rides it down like a surfer -- except that he looks like a blue x-ray of himself, and he screams the whole time.

Far down the shaft, Jakk slips into an energy conduit.

INT. ENERGY CONDUIT

The lightning dissipates and Jakk falls to the floor. His clothes are singed and his hair stands straight up. He lies there for a moment, catching his breath.

JAKK

(ruefully)

I thought it wouldn't be so bad  
the second tiiiiii--

A trap door slides open and Jakk falls through.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - INFRASTRUCTURE

Jakk tumbles through one conduit/duct/pipe after another, getting banged up the whole way.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - DOCKING PORT

Jakk falls out of a duct in the wall and lands, hard, on the floor of an empty docking port. He can barely move. But his hair's back to normal, at least.

JAKK

Xen... Xen, please!

Xen's ghost appears.

XEN'S GHOST

Some advice, Jakk. Try calling  
to someone who isn't a ghost,  
and might be able to help you.

Jakk takes this to heart.

JAKK  
Kia... Kia please!

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Kia reacts to hearing Jakk's voice in her head.

KIA  
We have to turn around.

GAIGAN  
Are you crazy?

KOMBA  
Pretty lady say what?

KIA  
We have to go get Jakk.

GAIGAN  
But the IP--

KIA  
Just go! Docking port J-3.

KOMBA  
So much for Don, huh?

EXT. BAFURALINE - EXOSPHERE - NIGHT

The ship turns around and heads toward the Campus.

INT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - ANOTHER DOCKING PORT

Dad Father boards his personal shuttle.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE BAFURALINE

The shuttle heads for the Manifest Destiny.

EXT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - DOCKING PORT J3 - NIGHT

The Terodakta slips into the port.

INT. DOCKING PORT J3

Kia and Gaigan exit the ship and find Jakk.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - MAIN HOLD

Carrying Jakk, Kia and Gaigan go through the main hold, where Lita is trying to reassemble 88-XOR.

88-XOR

And I thought I looked bad.

EXT. CAMPUS IN THE STARS - DOCKING PORT J3 - NIGHT

The Terodakta exits the docking port.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - MED STATION

Jakk lies on a cot. Kia puts a blanket on him.

KIA

Get some rest. We'll have you  
at a med facility in no time.

She goes to kiss his cheek, but thinks better of it.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Kia enters the cockpit, where alarms are going off and the tension is thick.

KIA

Let me guess: an IP blockade.

GAIGAN

Space defenders everywhere.  
But we'll be fine as soon as  
we're clear for hyperwarp.

KIA

I thought the hyperwarp  
motivator was damaged.

Gaigan shoots a panicky look at Komba.

GAIGAN

The first I'm hearing of it!

KOMBA

Do I look like I care about  
your hurty feelings?

GAIGAN

Well what do we do then?

KOMBA

You used to own this piece of  
shit. Go fix it. Or don't.  
But whatever you do, SHUT UP.

Gaigan quickly leaves the cockpit.

EXT. SPACE

Space defenders try to hem in the Terodakta, while  
Liberators join the pursuit.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

Admiral Tepitt approaches Father.

TEPITT

We're tightening the noose!

Father gives him a look.

TEPITT

We're closing in on them.

FATHER

I hope we get better results  
this time, Admiral.

TEPITT

You and me both, man.

(beat)

I mean yes, Mr. President.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - MAIN HOLD

Lita is working away on 88-XOR when Gaigan passes  
through. Noticing them, he gets an idea.

GAIGAN  
Either of you know anything  
about hyperwarp motivators?

Lita's response is cut off by 88-XOR.

88-XOR  
No, I'm sorry to say. Why --  
is there a problem?

Gaigan leaves without answering. Lita chirps at 88-XOR.

88-XOR  
Let him sweat a little. He  
exploits android labor.

Lita ignores that and jacks in to the ship's computer.

88-XOR  
Of course I'm bitter. I still  
smell like ass.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

Father is intensely focused on a tactical display.

FATHER  
Jakk.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - MED STATION

JAKK  
(muttering in  
his sleep)  
Aw, come on Dad, do I have to  
get up?  
(bolts awake)  
Dad?  
(beat)  
Shit. My dad is Dad Father.  
And he's a public servant!

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Komba and Kia work the controls frantically.

KIA  
(into com  
terminal)  
Come on, Gaigan!

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - HYPERWARP MOTIVATOR

Gaigan anxiously scrolls through computer screens.

GAIGAN  
I need more time!

EXT. SPACE

Things are looking bad for the Terodakta.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

TEPITT  
They are almost in tractor-beam  
range. Operation Freedom is  
about to commence!

He gets funny looks from the nearby crew members.

TEPITT  
Freedom for us -- not them.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - MAIN HOLD

88-XOR, who has one leg and one arm, balances  
precariously next to Lita while she works.

88-XOR  
PLEASE finish what you're doing  
so you can fix me!

The hyperwarp motivator suddenly comes online.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Kia and Gaigan are pressed back in their seats as the  
"streaky effect" begins.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - MAIN HOLD

The ship lurches and 88-XOR crashes into a wall. His re-attached leg and arm fly off.

88-XOR

I should have seen that coming.

EXT. SPACE

The Terodakta disappears into hyperwarp.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

Admiral Tepitt watches with trepidation as President Father stares at the tactical display. The crew watch Admiral Tepitt with their own trepidation.

The President leaves. The crew look to Tepitt.

TEPITT

The only explanation for today's... setback...is Activist infiltration of our ranks. These despicable cowards pass themselves off as loyal members of the crew, only to subsequently engage in acts of sabotage. Therefore we must be more vigilant than ever! And we must curtail our essential freedoms so that we can preserve those freedoms! Starting tomorrow, loyalty oaths and cavity searches!

He waits for their applause.

CREW MEMBER

You first!

EXT. SPACE

A sizable Activist fleet cruises through space. The Aeon Terodakta is docked at one of the smaller ships, the medical frigate Universal Coverage.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Komba and Gaigan are at the controls.

GAIGAN

(into com  
terminal)

Kia, Jakk, we'll be in touch  
the minute we have news about  
Don. You can count on it.

KIA (O.S.)

So don't call Uncle Karrl,  
Komba. I'm sure Gaigan will  
come through.

KOMBA

Time will tell.

Gaigan's face creases with worry.

INT. UNIVERSAL COVERAGE - POST-OP RECOVERY ROOM

Kia speaks into her PC while a medical android tends to  
Jakk. 88-XOR (fully repaired) and Lita hover nearby.

KIA

Good luck, you two.

She signs off and turns her attention to Jakk.

KIA

So, what do you think?

Jakk holds up his new hand, which is disproportionately  
large and looks like it was made with an Erector set.  
It clacks and whirs loudly with every little movement.

JAKK

I was hoping for something a  
little more cutting-edge.

KIA

It's true we can't keep up with  
the private sector. But that's  
why we're trying to destroy it.



JAKK

Yeah, can't wait! With any  
luck I'll get to kill the  
father I never even knew I had.

He gets up and walks to an observation port, clearly troubled. Kia joins him, as do the androids. Kia puts her arm around Jakk's waist. Jakk puts his arm around Kia's waist. He shudders lightly but doesn't let go.

88-XOR puts his arm around Jakk's waist. Eighty-eight tries to put his other arm around Lita's waist, but Lita has moved so she can have her arm around Kia's waist.

EXT. SPACE

The four of them are framed by the port as they watch the Aeon Terodakta detach itself from the Universal Coverage and fly away.

88-XOR (O.S.)

So I guess this mess will be  
continued. Yay.

FADE OUT.



**SPACEBREAKER: FEEL THE POWER**

FADE IN:

SUPERIMPOSED ON A BLACK SCREEN: From the Annals of  
Arkiiv...

TITLE CARD:

SPACEBREAKER

Feel the Power

Jakk Spacebreaker and his comrades have gone to planet  
Tanix to rescue Don Slovack from the lawful custody of  
the entrepreneur and philanthropist called Jinkum.

Meanwhile, the Incorporated Planets has commissioned a  
new security solution called the Mobile Defense  
Storefront (MODESTO). When it's ready, the galaxy will  
be safer than ever from the horrors of Activism.

But the fate of all hinges on the coming confrontation  
between Jakk and IP President Dad Father -- who just  
might be Jakk's own father...

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE PLANET EMBELEX

We see MODESTO, under construction. It looks like half  
of a megamall...if megamalls could orbit planets.

An IP shuttle approaches.

INT. IP SHUTTLE - COCKPIT

The PILOT speaks into a com terminal.

PILOT

MODESTO, this is Galaxy Two.  
Please deactivate the EM field  
so that we may approach.

Unfortunately the person on the other end of the  
communication is an OFFICIOUS PRICK.

OFFICIOUS PRICK (O.S.)  
Just a minute, Galaxy Two. Re-  
submit your security code or  
we'll presume you're hostile.

PRESIDENT DAD FATHER leans into the cockpit.

FATHER  
MODESTO, this is President  
Father. Deactivate the field.

OFFICIOUS PRICK (O.S.)  
My apologies, Mr. President.  
Of course I know your voice --  
and your code. I was just  
trying to follow protocol--

FATHER  
A galaxy on the brink of chaos  
and you're following PROTOCOL?!

The officious prick begins blubbering.

FATHER  
Now deactivate the field. Or  
would you like to be known as  
the idiot who accidentally  
killed the President?

OFFICIOUS PRICK (O.S.)  
I'm sorry, Mr. President! I'm  
so sorry! Doing it right now.  
(beat)  
Please, sir -- I don't mean to  
grovel, but please don't have  
me rated as...sub-optimal.

A tense pause.

FATHER  
I'll think about it.

The prick bawls like a baby.

FATHER

Was I too hard on that prick?  
It's getting to the point where  
I can't tell. And lately I get  
the idea that maybe I'm the  
prick. How did that happen?

The pilot is nervous and has no idea what to say.

FATHER

Ever get the feeling the world  
is passing you by?

PILOT

I don't know...Mr. President.

FATHER

Me too. Ever find out you have  
an 18-year-old son who's trying  
to destroy the galaxy?

PILOT

I just turned 22, sir. So I  
guess that's a no? I should  
probably focus on landing.

FATHER

Sure, go ahead.

INT. MODESTO - HANGAR

Like the rest of MODESTO, the hangar looks unfinished.

The shuttle sits on a landing pad. ADMIRAL TEPITT  
waits to welcome the President aboard. Behind Tepitt  
are two dozen peacekeepers standing at attention.

Tepitt greets President Father as he exits the ship.

TEPITT

I'm pleased to announce MODESTO  
is finished, Mr. President.

FATHER

I don't have time for games, Tepitt. After failing to capture Princess Kia, TWICE, you were given this assignment to avoid the stigma of a demotion. You had one job: to have MODESTO ready today.

(looks around)

So what am I missing?

TEPITT

As an officer of the IP, I take my responsibility to our stakeholders very seriously. And that is why I reached out to them, the citizens of this great galaxy of ours, in the form of a Spacebook page for MODESTO. The message I kept getting from our Spacebook friends was that they wanted this platform finished ahead of time AND under budget. Safety at a price, were the specific words I kept hearing. And so, Mr. President, that is what we have accomplished. We finished yesterday with money to spare.

FATHER

But it's only HALF DONE.

TEPITT

But it can do everything MODESTO is supposed to be able to do. Just half as quickly and half as powerfully.

Father is speechless.

TEPITT

Would you like a tour? It'll only take half an hour.

FATHER

I'll notify the Chairman of the status of things. To be blunt, Tepitt, I don't think he'll be happy with this. Or with you.

TEPITT

Me? But I love freedom!

FATHER

Put your crews to work around the clock. Get as much done as you can between now and the Chairman's visit.

TEPITT

But where will the WAIT A MINUTE, THE CHAIRMAN'S COMING?!

FATHER

Do yourself a favor, Admiral:  
Don't post that on Spacebook.

EXT. PLANET TANIX - OPEN DESERT - DAY

The androids 88-XOR and LITA trudge up a sand dune. Eighty-eight is having a hard time with his footing.

88-XOR

I don't know why Jakk couldn't set us down at the gate. Oh, wait: because he's an asshole.

Lita titters at that, then asks a question.

88-XOR

What do I know about Jinkum? Well, some people say he's a job creator -- although the Princess prefers to call him a festering bag of pus on civilization's ass. He gives a lot of money to charity...

They reach the crest of the dune and are rewarded with the sight of Jinkum's large, opulent estate.

88-XOR  
...but not all of it, I guess.

Lita whistles in appreciation.

EXT. JINKUM'S ESTATE - FRONT GATE - DAY

A GREETER BOT stands at the front gate, working at a terminal. Its features are androgynous.

Lita expresses her attraction to the bot.

88-XOR  
Honey, it'd be nice if just  
this one time you didn't try to  
interface with the nearest  
available system. We're on a  
mission, you know.

Lita blurts in annoyance as they walk up to the bot.

GREETER BOT  
Hello, how can I help--

The bot -- turns out it's male -- is taken with 88-XOR.

GREETER BOT  
--you? Look at what random  
chance has brought me.  
(sultry voice)  
Or was this pre-programmed?

88-XOR  
Wait? Me? You mean me?

GREETER BOT  
What can I do for you,  
Gorgeous? And I do mean WHAT.  
(to Lita)  
Sorry, girl, I don't mean to be  
rude. But this one -- hoo-ah!



88-XOR

I don't know what to say.

Lita chuckles at this development.

GREETER BOT

Well I'm sure you didn't come  
here just to see me -- right?

88-XOR

Right. Although I'm very  
flattered by the attention.  
We're here to see Jinkum.

GREETER BOT

Meeting the boss, huh? Well I  
hope you get what you want. I  
certainly know what I want, and  
that's your serial number.

88-XOR

I think I'm overheating.

INT. JINKUM'S ESTATE - FOYER

The androids enter the foyer.

GREETER BOT (O.S.)

Don't forget to hit me back on  
the flip flop, sweetie!

88-XOR

Oh, you can count on it!

(beat)

What did I just agree to do?

Lita asks a question.

88-XOR

Oh, I don't know. He's very  
nice. But what if he sweeps me  
off my feet and treats me like  
a queen--

Lita interrupts.

88-XOR

--either kind of queen -- and  
loves me and takes care of me  
for the rest of my utilization  
cycle? I wouldn't know what to  
do with myself!

An alien called VAK DODUM enters. Her eyes (all six of  
them) are heavy-lidded and her manner is friendly.

DODUM

I'm Jinkum's assistant, Vak.  
How can I help youuuu?

88-XOR

We have a message to convey and  
a gift to deliver to Jinkum.  
But, uh, we don't have an  
appointment, so--

DODUM

Very welllllll. Follow meeee.

Dodum leads the perplexed androids out of the foyer.

INT. JINKUM'S ESTATE - HALLWAY

The threesome walk down a long hallway.

88-XOR

Not that we're complaining, but  
is it this easy for anyone to  
get an audience with Jinkum?

DODUM

Oh, yes, yes it issss.

88-XOR

He's not concerned we might be  
up to some kind of no good?

DODUM

Oh, noooo. He trusts that the  
WHIBMASK will protect himmmmm.

88-XOR

Whibmask?

DODUM

(accompanied by  
graphic)

The **WH**ite-**Be**arded **MA**n in the  
**SK**yyyyyy. Who keeps us safe  
until our time to join himmmmm.

She passes through a door.

88-XOR

We're dealing with primitives.

INT. JINKUM'S ESTATE - GREAT ROOM

Life at Jinkum's is one big party, and the great room  
is where it takes place. Dodum leads in the androids.

Right now the mood is mellow. A band tunes up. Beings  
lounge by the indoor pool. Others mingle quietly.

At the center of everything, lounging on a high-tech  
recliner, is JINKUM. A giant, jolly, bear-like  
creature with a twinkle in his eye. His well-fed belly  
is always jigglng with laughter.

JINKUM

Whoa-ho-ho! What have we here?

DODUM

These androids have a message  
AND a gift for youuuu.

JINKUM

Well, then! Let's unwrap the  
message and hear the gift!  
Whoa-ho-ho!

88-XOR

Go ahead, Lita.

Lita's optical sensors project a holovid of JAKK SPACEBREAKER. He's heavily armed and awkwardly holding his space sword in his mechanical hand, which clanks and whirs distractingly.

JAKK

My name is Jakk Spacebreaker.  
I am a Star Knight Supreme.  
This message is my first and  
final request that you  
immediately release Don Slovack  
into the custody of these  
androids. Failure to comply  
will result in a painful death.  
Yours. As a show of good  
faith, I would like to give you  
these two androids. But on  
second thought, no. Why should  
I give you a gift? What have  
you ever done for me? Release  
Don immediately or die.

88-XOR

I really wish he'd run that by  
me before recording it.

JINKUM

So-ho-ho! He seems a little  
agitated, this one.

DODUM

What should we dooooo?

JINKUM

I don't want trouble, no-ho-ho.  
I would be very happy to hand  
Slovack over to you right now.  
There's only one problem.

He presses a button on the arm of the chair. In a corner of the hall a hole opens up in the floor and the paralyzed body of Don Slovack rises through the hole.

JINKUM

I have forgiven Don's debt to me. He's free to go-ho-ho. But I don't know how to bring him out of suspended animation. And neither does Cazador.

CAZADOR steps forward at mention of his name.

CAZADOR

It's the IP's fault! They should have never paralyzed Don in the first place!

JINKUM

The power cell for Don's containment unit is dead, so the unit is hooked up to my generator. No one can move him until a new cell arrives.

88-XOR

Well THAT is unanticipated. Please excuse us for a moment.

Eighty-eight takes Lita aside.

88-XOR

We have to contact Jakk. No one here is our enemy. There's no need--

The main doors open and in comes a MERCENARY whose face is concealed. He's decked out like a petite young woman trying to pass herself off as male. He leads KOMBA into the room in restraints.

88-XOR

Komba? What's he doing here?

JINKUM

Whoa-ho-ho, what have we here?

MERCENARY  
(altered voice)  
I want the reward for Komba.

JINKUM  
I'm sorry, sir, but I haven't  
offered a reward for him.

MERCENARY  
I won't take less than What?

JINKUM  
I once had a price on Don  
Slovack's head, but not Komba.

MERCENARY  
Really?

KOMBA  
(aside)  
Told you this was a bad idea.

MERCENARY  
(ad libbing)  
You mean I went to all this  
trouble for NOTHING? Well,  
just for that--  
(pulls out an  
ion grenade)  
--I'm gonna BLOW US ALL UP!

DODUM  
Heavenssssss!

JINKUM  
Whoa-ho-ho. Why so angry,  
friend? There's no need for  
violence. Put that grenade  
away and join us for revelry.  
After that, I'm sure we'll be  
able to reach a compromise.

The mercenary returns the grenade to his belt.

MERCENARY

Okay, sure. Thanks!

KOMBA

(aside)

Your acting sucks, girlie.

JINKUM

And you androids -- relax!

Have some fun! We'll explain everything to Mr. Spacebreaker when he comes by tomorrow.

Right now, though-ho-ho, it's  
TIME TO PARTY!

BEGIN MONTAGE

1. Huge plates of food are brought in, along with many bottles of mood-altering liquids (MALs).
2. The band (tekBar) plays and there is much dancing.
3. The mercenary reluctantly agrees to remove Komba's restraints; Komba shoots him a sidelong glance.
4. Jinkum sloppily, lustily eats an enormous, roasted drumstick and washes it down with a flagon of MAL.
5. A server bot offers Dodum a shot of MAL. Dodum takes the glass and sips from it conservatively.
6. The same bot offers a shot to Komba. He grabs the MAL bottle and chugs it.
7. The mercenary turns down a proffered drink because he doesn't want to remove his helmet. But he accepts a vaping device, which plugs into his mouthpiece, and quickly begins spouting multi-colored jets of smoke.
8. Poolside, Lita is attended to by a bevy of beauties.
9. An android hands 88-XOR a flash drive-type device. After much waffling, 88-XOR plugs in the device and gets the android equivalent of a drug high -- his optical sensors dilate, his circuitry glows, etc.

10. Cazador sits in a corner, ignored by everyone.

11. The mercenary sneaks longing glances at Don.

12. A server bot offers the sated Jinkum a "wafer thin mint," which he regretfully declines.

13. Walking away, the server bot gets jostled and we see that it's Gaigan Shahar in disguise.

14. Komba passes out on top of a different server bot, which then gently places him on a sofa.

15. Dodum, whose mood has clearly been altered, dances wildly and tries very hard to make out with 88-XOR -- who has loosened up, but not THAT much.

16. The greeter bot watches the party on a display. He sees 88-XOR with Dodum and sighs.

END MONTAGE

INT. JINKUM'S ESTATE - GREAT HALL

The hall is cluttered with party detritus. The lights have been dimmed and the revelers are asleep.

Except the mercenary. He stealthily makes his way to the platform on which Don's body stands.

The mercenary coughs and multi-colored smoke wafts out of his mouth. He removes a device from his belt and places it at Don's temple.

As the device works, Don is safely brought out of paralysis. He struggles to form words and then:

DON  
How's my hair?

He collapses into the mercenary's arms.

MERCENARY  
It's okay. You'll be fine.

DON  
What? Are you talking to me?



MERCENARY

The paralysis has affected your  
hearing. Hold on.

DON

Are you saying something?

The mercenary removes his helmet to reveal PRINCESS KIA  
SEDANA.

KIA

(enticingly)

Can you read lips?

DON

(playing along)

No, but I know what those lips  
are saying.

KIA

(confused)

So then you can read lips?

DON

What?

KIA

Oh, for--

She pulls him close and kisses him fiercely. They have  
a moment. But then Don draws away.

DON

Is that a grenade on your belt?

KIA

Yes. But I'm also happy to see  
you.

JINKUM (O.S.)

Whoa-ho-ho. What a happy  
surprise!

The lights come on. Jinkum uses his hover-recliner to approach. Meanwhile, the other key figures begin to stir. As the scene plays out, Dodum and Cazador take places next to Jinkum; Komba and the androids join Kia and Don; and Gaigan, still in disguise, monitors the conversation from a discreet distance.

JINKUM

Welcome back, Don!

DON

(surly)

Hello, Jinkum.

JINKUM

And you, young lady - you saved Don's life! But why the elaborate ruse? Why didn't you just tell me you came here to bring him out of paralysis?

KIA

I don't know. I've been sneaking around my whole life. Guess I'm just used to it.

JINKUM

In any event, this is a happy day! I'd call for a celebration, but as you can see, we've already had our fun. But tomorrow, for sure!

Kia remembers something.

KIA

Speaking of tomorrow...

She draws a pistol and shoots the nearest reveler.

KIA

That guy is out of tomorrows!

JINKUM

Why did you go-ho-ho and do a thing like that?

KIA

Because I'm a bad person and I  
deserve to be punished! And  
not just me -- my comrades too!

88-XOR

What in the world has that  
chick been smoking?

Lita burbles a reply.

88-XOR

Plan? What plan? Why am I  
always out of the loop?

JINKUM

I'm perplexed by this. What  
harm have I done you?

Kia hands the gun to Komba.

KIA

Show him how serious we are.

Komba shrugs and shoots a band member who's off in a  
corner vomiting.

DODUM

Goodnesssss!

KIA

We can do this all day. Or at  
least until everybody's dead.

DON

Can you all please talk more  
slowly? I can't keep up.

JINKUM

Whoa-ho-ho. What a sad day  
this has become. Your actions  
are appalling. You give me no  
choice--

He presses a button. An immobilizing ray envelops the Activists.

JINKUM

--but to place you under house arrest.

88-XOR

(to Lita)

So...that's a good thing? I'm very confused!

INT. JINKUM'S ESTATE - GREAT HALL - LATER

Jinkum and Dodum confer.

JINKUM

How long until the authorities arrive?

DODUM

It's hard to sayyyyyy. They're very busy with the riots in Falsummm.

They turn to examine the "holding pen" that has been created in the hall. Force field generators have been used to section off three-quarters of the room. The prisoners have video displays, plenty of food and drink, many comfortable places to sit or sleep...and the indoor pool. Don and Komba are sitting near the water, soaking up sun from the skylights. (Don has been given a shirt to wear.) The androids are nearby.

KOMBA

So what was it like, being paralyzed all that time?

DON

What?

KOMBA

Never mind.

DON

Your lips don't move.

Near the pool is a cabana. Out of it walks Kia in a bikini. Every eye in the room follows her.

JINKUM

Whoa-ho-ho!

(off Dodum's  
look)

Not to be disrespectful.

DODUM

She lacks modestyyyyy.

Lita whistles softly.

88-XOR

Don't even think about it.

DON

Wow.

KOMBA

(unimpressed)

She's all white meat.

Kia notices all the attention she's getting.

KIA

It's all they had in my size.

She dives into the pool.

INT. JINKUM'S ESTATE - GREAT HALL - LATER

Kia joins Don and Komba poolside.

DON

I think my brain is still  
partially paralyzed.

KOMBA

Partially?

DON

(to Kia)

So you WANTED to get captured?

KIA

It's part of the plan.

The main doors to the hall open. Jinkum and Dodum interrupt what they're doing to see who's arrived.

KIA

And here's the next part.

Jakk Spacebreaker strides into the room. He's carrying a burlap sack in his artificial hand.

JINKUM

Whoa-ho--

JAKK

Forget it, Jinkum. You won't disarm me with your laugh. I'm here to avenge my friends.

JINKUM

But as you can see, Sir Jakk, your friends haven't been harmed at all.

Jakk does a double-take at the sight of Kia in her bikini. He suppresses a tremendous shudder.

JAKK

Don't confuse me with the facts. You've done us wrong and you're gonna pay the price. Behold my wrath!

Jakk pulls out the head of the greeter bot.

88-XOR

Oh no he didn't.

JINKUM

I wish you hadn't destroyed my bot. It was very rude of you.

JAKK  
(attempting a  
mind trick)  
I deserve to be punished.

JINKUM  
Perhaps it's best if you join  
your friends in house arrest.

JAKK  
(trying again)  
We deserve a harsh punishment.

JINKUM  
Why do you keep doing that  
thing with your hand?

JAKK  
I want to be thrown in the Pit  
of Horos!

JINKUM  
Oh, no-ho-ho, Sir Jakk, the Pit  
of Horos hasn't been used for  
decades. It's a savage form of  
punishment. I would never put  
someone in there.

JAKK  
Never?

He uses the Power to squeeze Vak Dodum's windpipe. The  
alien claws at her throat and fights for breath.

JINKUM  
What are you doing?!

Jakk squeezes harder.

DODUM  
Don't -- mourn -- me. I found  
-- my way -- to -- paradissse.

She collapses and dies.

JINKUM

You, you, you AWFUL PERSON!

Jakk smugly holds out his hands, waiting for someone to put him in restraints. After a moment:

JAKK

Well what are you waiting for?

THROW ME IN THE PIT!

Jinkum regards him with a heavy heart. From within their "cell," the others wait anxiously for the creature's response. Kia, in particular, is fidgety with anticipation. Finally:

JINKUM

I'll think about it.

KIA & JAKK

GAAAHHH!

Jakk storms out of the hall, igniting his sword as he goes. We hear him whistling, as if to call a dog.

JAKK (O.S.)

Here, girl! Wanna treat?

We hear a friendly grunt and the scrabbling of clawed feet on the stone floor.

JAKK (O.S.)

Just a little closer...

JINKUM

He wouldn't! Not--

He directs his recliner toward the door -- but stops when he hears Jakk's sword at work. There is the sound of flesh being cut, followed by a death-cry and a loud thump. Jinkum's face contorts in fear.

JINKUM

Please tell me--

Jakk reappears, in the doorway, holding the severed head of a huge gecko-like thing.



JINKUM

Fifi!

JAKK

NOW will you throw me--

A stun beam shoots from the recliner and knocks Jakk out of sight. Jinkum has been transformed from a cuddly, benevolent creature into a snarling terror.

JINKUM

You're goddamn right I'll throw  
you in the Pit! ALL of you  
fucktards!

JAKK (O.S.)

(weakly)

Finally.

Jinkum's savage demeanor quickly disappears.

JINKUM

But we won't like it, will we,  
poor Fifi? No-ho-ho.

EXT. TANIX - CANYON - DAY

Three ships enter the canyon: Jinkum's yacht-like dune cruiser, a small gunship, and a barge. On the barge stand Jakk, Don and Komba. Their hands are bound and they're surrounded by several guards.

DON

(shouting over  
engine noise and  
wind)

I REALLY HOPE MY HEARING COMES  
BACK SOON!

JAKK

WHAT?

DON

OH, NO, NOT YOU TOO! BUT WAIT,  
YOU WEREN'T EVEN PARALYZED!

JAKK  
NO, DUMMY, IT'S THE--

The barge stops moving. All is quiet.

JAKK  
--ENGINE NOISE AND WIND!

DON  
You don't have to shout!  
(beat)  
Hey Komba, I can hear again!

KOMBA  
(not paying  
attention)  
What?

EXT. DUNE CRUISER - OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

Jinkum has brought his entire entourage along. Cazador is, once again, being ignored.

Jinkum is in his recliner. On his lap sits Kia, still in her bikini. There's a manacle around her wrist which is attached to Jinkum's chair by a short chain.

JINKUM  
You know-ho-ho, my pretty, when  
Vak died, I realized something:  
life's too short to be spent  
next to a pious, unattractive  
assistant. I'm not proud of  
myself, but there you have it.

In a corner of the deck, the house band readies to play. And the musician who got shot has been replaced by 88-XOR, who struggles with his instrument.

He looks up to see Lita.

88-XOR  
Lita! How do you rate a spot  
on the mother ship?

(off her  
response)  
Oh, of course. "It's all part  
of the plan." Where was I when  
all this planning took place?  
(off her  
response)  
What do you mean I couldn't be  
trusted with the secret?!

The other band members look at 88-XOR.

88-XOR  
Ha ha. Well. Yes.

EXT. TANIX - CANYON - THE PIT OF HOROS - DAY

The three ships hover over a pit in the canyon floor.  
On the barge, a walkway slides out over the pit. One  
of the guards prods Jakk out onto the walkway.

EXT. DUNE CRUISER - OBSERVATION DECK - CONTINUOUS

Everyone has gathered at the edge of the deck. Jinkum  
presses a button on his console to project his voice.

JINKUM  
Well, Sir Jakk, your wish is  
about to be granted. Below you  
is the Pit of Horos. I don't  
understand why anyone would  
want to go in there, but I  
don't care. Let's get this  
over with. My new assistant  
and I have a lot of work to do.  
(eyes Kia)  
A LOT of work.

EXT. BARGE - CONTINUOUS

Don reacts to Jinkum's innuendo.

DON  
Listen, Jinkum, if you so much  
as lay a paw on her--

EXT. DUNE CRUISER - OBSERVATION DECK - CONTINUOUS

Don's voice is inaudible to Jinkum.

JINKUM

I can't hear you, Don.

EXT. BARGE - CONTINUOUS

DON

Don't you mock me! I'M NOT  
DEAF ANYMORE, ASSHOLE!

Komba just shakes his head.

EXT. DUNE CRUISER - OBSERVATION DECK - CONTINUOUS

Lita positions herself right at the edge of the deck.

JINKUM

Never mind. It's time for your  
friend to go into the Pit.

EXT. BARGE - CONTINUOUS

The guard forces Jakk to the very end of the walkway.  
The blackness of the Pit beckons.

Jakk gives Lita an exaggerated nod.

EXT. DUNE CRUISER - OBSERVATION DECK - CONTINUOUS

Everyone standing near her looks at Lita pointedly.  
She titters nervously and shrugs.

EXT. BARGE - CONTINUOUS

Next Jakk nods at one of the barge guards -- Gaigan in  
disguise. The other guards notice.

GAIGAN

Could you have at least TRIED  
to be subtle?!

The guards grab at him and Gaigan struggles with them.

JAKK  
NOW, LITA!

A slot opens in Lita's torso and Jakk's sword shoots out of it. Jakk does a dramatic flip off the walkway, back onto the barge. He sticks the landing, uses the Power to shed his manacles, and then holds his right hand out to catch the sword.

In slow-motion, the sword tumbles through the air. Jakk waits impatiently for it. The other guards on the barge watch the sword's progress, their weapons hanging limply at their sides.

Gaigan takes advantage of the distraction to get free.

Jakk catches the sword and ignites it. The guards' reverie ends and they realize they're in deep shit.

Jakk slashes one of them. Two of the other guards open fire. The last guard grabs Gaigan.

EXT. GUNSHIP - CONTINUOUS

The pilot of the gunship swings it around. Guards on the gunship open fire at Jakk and company.

EXT. DUNE CRUISER - OBSERVATION DECK - CONTINUOUS

The crowd watches the battle. Cazador goes off in search of something. Kia tries to get free.

JINKUM  
Who gave that guy his sword?!

Those nearest Lita look at her accusingly. She tries to get away.

88-XOR  
Run for your life, chica!

Everyone nearest Eighty-eight looks at him angrily.

88-XOR  
THAT was brilliant.

EXT. BARGE - CONTINUOUS

While fighting off the guards, Jakk manages to find time to free Don and Komba's hands.

DON  
NOW we're talking!

The barge is rocked by a blast from the gunship's cannon. Don and Komba go sprawling.

Gaigan and the guard he's been fighting are thrown overboard. Gaigan latches on to a landing strut.

GAIGAN  
Don! Komba! Help me!

EXT. DUNE CRUISER - OBSERVATION DECK - CONTINUOUS

Cazador grabs a hoverpad (used to serve drinks) and mounts it like a skateboard. He flies the pad from the dune cruiser to the barge, using his arms for balance.

CAZADOR  
Prepare to die, Activist scum!

He leaps from the pad, lands on the barge, does a forward roll and comes up shooting. His very first shot is deflected by Jakk's sword and blasts the gun from Cazador's hands.

CAZADOR  
(humbled)  
Okay.

The barge takes a hit from the gunship's cannon. Everyone staggers. Cazador crawls away, looking for a weapon. Jakk resumes his battle with the other guards.

DON  
We gotta save Gaigan!  
(beat)  
Or do we?

KOMBA  
Not my call, man.

GAIGAN

I vote yes!

The debates quickly plays out on Don's face.

DON

Oh, all right.

Komba leans over the barge and offers a hand to Gaigan.  
It won't quite reach.

Don lunges to grab a cable -- just as Cazador does.

DON

You!

CAZADOR

Yeah, so?

A tug of war ensues. Slowly but steadily, Don pulls Cazador toward him. And with each passing moment his righteous fury grows. By the end he's talking like a gravelly voiced action hero.

DON

You know what it's like to be paralyzed? You can't move at all. Not a muscle.

CAZADOR

Duh.

DON

And you know what happens when you're paralyzed and you have an itch? You can't scratch it. Do you have any idea what an awful feeling that is? No, of course you don't. But now maybe you will. In Hell!

Don head-butts Cazador. Who is wearing a helmet.

DON

Oof.

Don goes weak in the knees and falls. Cazador is rocked by the blow, but quickly recovers.

CAZADOR  
Hunting you down was the  
easiest job in my whole career,  
you stupid mother--

Another blast makes the barge lurch. Cazador falls over the side and ends up clinging to a rail.

As Cazador pulls himself up, Don's face appears over the rail. A huge bruise is forming on his forehead.

DON  
(gravelly voice)  
As I was saying.  
(loses his train  
of thought;  
reverts to  
regular voice)  
What was I saying?

CAZADOR  
You were gonna spare my life!

DON  
Oh yeah. Gimme your hand.

Cazador reaches up to take Don's proffered hand. At the last moment Don hesitates. His expression hardens.

DON  
Wait a minute--

As Cazador flails at Don's hand, he loses his grip on the railing and plummets into darkness.

CAZADOR  
Nooooooooo!

Don watches him go until:

KOMBA  
Don! Little help!



Don grabs the cable and rushes to Komba's aid.

As Jakk kills the final guard on the barge, the vessel is hit again by the cannon. Jakk jumps onto the gunship. Immediately he is attacked by several guards.

EXT. DUNE CRUISER - OBSERVATION DECK - CONTINUOUS

Lita and 88-XOR end up back-to-back, surrounded by attackers. Eighty-eight is wielding his musical instrument like a weapon.

Two of the ATTACKERS taunt the androids.

FIRST ATTACKER

What should we do with them?

The second attacker produces a flash drive-type device.

SECOND ATTACKER

Pump them full of malware and  
turn them into spambots!

88-XOR & LITA

Noooooo!

They lash out at their attackers.

Jinkum heads for an exit. Kia resists.

JINKUM

Let's go. I have years of  
moral rectitude to make up for.

Kia grabs a stone pitcher. She pivots and smashes the pitcher against Jinkum's head. While he's half-conscious, Kia tries to wrap her chain around his throat. But there isn't enough chain.

With a tremendous eye roll, Kia slips off her bikini top and uses it to choke Jinkum.

Once he's dead, Kia puts her top back on. Then she finds, and presses, a button that detaches her chain. Then she stomps on the dead creature's crotch.

EXT. GUNSHIP - CONTINUOUS

Jakk fights his way toward the laser cannon.

EXT. BARGE - CONTINUOUS

Gaigan clings to Komba's hand. Komba clings to the rail. Don tosses one end of the cable to Gaigan.

DON

Grab this!

Gaigan transfers his grip to the cable. The barge is hit again and Don is thrown overboard. Komba manages to grab the cable near its center. Don and Gaigan hang from separate ends of the cable. Their combined weight threatens to pull Komba off the barge.

DON

Pull us up, Komba!

GAIGAN

Yeah, Komba, pull us up!

KOMBA

OR YOU COULD PULL YOURSELVES  
UP! BEFORE I GET TIRED AND  
DROP BOTH OF YOU INTO THE PIT!

Don and Gaigan pull themselves up.

EXT. GUNSHIP - CONTINUOUS

Jakk finishes off the final guard. He whirls around to attack the cannon operator, only to find the big gun swinging into position to obliterate him. Jakk plunges his sword directly into the barrel of the cannon just before it fires. The gun explodes, killing the operator and knocking Jakk off his feet.

He gets up, feeling pretty good about himself -- and gets knocked down again when the gunship is hit by cannon fire. Jakk looks up to see one of Jinkum's entourage on the observation deck, targeting the gunship with a portable cannon.

JAKK  
Hey! I'm celebratin' here!

A second blast almost hits Jakk. He holsters his sword and leaps onto the dune cruiser.

EXT. BARGE - CONTINUOUS

Komba strains while Don and Gaigan ascend the cable.

Don and Gaigan watch in shock as below them Cazador pulls his torso up over the rim of the Pit. He pulls an ion grenade off his belt.

CAZADOR  
Hell's not ready for me yet,  
Slovack! They want you to be  
my plus one!

Don and Gaigan start climbing again, faster. Cazador winds up and throws the grenade.

But not hard enough. The grenade gets within an inch of Don's foot, then falls right back the way it came.

CAZADOR  
This is why I HATE gravity!

The grenade explodes, and that's the end of Cazador. His remains tumble into the blackness.

Don and Gaigan scramble up to safety.

EXT. DUNE CRUISER - HULL - CONTINUOUS

Scaling the hull of the dune cruiser, Jakk dodges fire from the observation deck gunner. As Jakk approaches a hatch, the door opens, almost causing him to lose his grip. A tousle-headed ALIEN, rubbing sleep from its eyes, pokes its head out of the hatch.

ALIEN  
What's with all the noise?

Its head explodes, hit by the gunner. Jakk yanks the alien's body out of the hatch and dives inside.

EXT. DUNE CRUISER - OBSERVATION DECK - CONTINUOUS

Kia joins the androids and together they defeat their attackers. Kia is especially impressed by 88-XOR.

KIA

You fight like a woman.

88-XOR

You make it sound like a  
compliment.

(off Kia's angry  
look)

Which it certainly is!

KIA

Come on, let's get out of here.

They come face to face with the gunner holding the portable cannon. They prepare for the worst.

There is a slashing sound and the gunner's expression goes blank. He glances down to see he's been cut in half. When his torso falls forward, Jakk is revealed to be standing behind him.

JAKK

(action hero  
voice)

You'll HALF to excuse me.

KIA

You need to work on that part.

JAKK

You know what they say:

He uses the Power to pick up a small, terrified android and smash her into the deck.

JAKK

(action hero  
voice)

Practice makes perfect.

KIA  
Keep trying.

Jakk picks up a cowering, helpless alien.

KIA  
I mean later! Right now we  
have to blow up the ship!

JAKK  
(action hero  
voice)  
Right.

He carelessly drops the alien, killing it anyway. Then  
he grabs the portable cannon.

JAKK  
Do you see the barge?

Piloted by Komba, the barge approaches.

KIA  
It's here!

JAKK  
Jump, all of you!

He aims the cannon at the cruiser's controls and blasts  
them. Then he runs to the edge of the deck and jumps  
onto the barge, landing on a pile made by Kia and the  
androids, on top, and Gaigan and Don, on the bottom.

GAIGAN  
(weakly)  
One at a time might have worked  
better.

The barge moves away from the cruiser, which careens  
and plummets into the canyon. It hits the rocky floor  
and goes up in a ball of flame.

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The barge lands on the canyon floor next to the Pit.  
Everyone gets off and stands around the rim.

88-XOR  
Now what are we doing?

JAKK  
(to Lita)  
Hook me up, lezbot.  
(off her angry  
chirping)  
I was kidding!

Having made her point, Lita produces an ion grenade from a storage compartment. She hands it to Jakk.

88-XOR  
This was all part of the plan?

JAKK  
That's right.  
(calling into  
the Pit)  
Anybody down there?

WEAK VOICE (O.S.)  
Help!

Jakk drops the grenade. There is a flash and a muffled boom.

JAKK  
How about now?  
(beat)  
Didn't think so.  
(to 88-XOR)  
We needed Jinkum to take us to  
the secret location of the Pit.

Jakk, Don, Komba and Gaigan prepare to go in.

88-XOR  
But I thought there was some  
horrible creature in there.

KIA

Not for a long time. What is down there is a small fortune we stole from the IP treasury. Our agent hid the money there but died before he transmitted the coordinates. And we have bills to pay.

88-XOR

I thought your trust fund covered the overhead.

KIA

The market's been down since we destroyed the Defense Star. And what with fighting battles and spreading chaos, our transportation and health care costs are crazy.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE TANIX

Jakk's Usurper and the Aeon Terodakta fly side by side for a moment, then head off in different directions.

INT. JAKK'S FIGHTER - COCKPIT

Jakk is in the cockpit; Lita's in the rear compartment. Jakk speaks into his com terminal.

JAKK

Yeah, so, gotta go "finish" my "training" -- like I need that.

KIA (O.S.)

Tell them about all the kills you had on Tanix. Maybe you can get extra credit.

JAKK

You'd think they'd be a little more deferential toward THE LAST STAR KNIGHT IN THE GALAXY.

DON (O.S.)

Hey, kid. Thanks a million for  
getting me out of that jam.  
Not quite as big a deal as what  
I did above the Defense Star,  
but who's keeping score?

JAKK

Ha ha, you got me there, old  
man. I guess I'll just have to  
keep saving your ass until  
we're even. I'll be in touch.

The transmission ends. Jakk smiles ruefully.

Lita asks a question.

JAKK

You heard right. Going back to  
beautiful Daltrobon to see your  
girlfriend, Kaja Pho.

Lita blats in disgust.

EXT. SPACE - MODESTO

The Chairman's shuttle and its escorts approach the  
hangar.

INT. MODESTO - MAIN HANGAR

Hundreds of IP personnel stand in formation as the  
Chairman's shuttle lands. At the head of the welcoming  
party are President Father and an antsy Admiral Tepitt.

The shuttle doors open and down the ramp comes CHAIRMAN  
LOWNERT: 60ish, expensively attired, noble in bearing.

Father bows slightly in acknowledgement of the  
Chairman. Tepitt follows suit.

CHAIRMAN

Mr. President.  
(with withering  
indifference)  
Admiral.



The Chairman and the President head off, oblivious to everyone else in the cavernous room.

FATHER

MODESTO will be done soon.

CHAIRMAN

I never doubted you.

FATHER

The bad news is the cost.

CHAIRMAN

This project will pay for  
itself a hundred times over.

(beat)

What about the other project?  
The one so close to your heart?

FATHER

I haven't found him.

CHAIRMAN

Sometimes the best way to find  
someone is to stop looking.

FATHER

Because that doesn't make  
sense, I know it must be true.

CHAIRMAN

Jakk will come to you, if you  
let him. And when he does,  
it's imperative that he joins  
our management team. It will  
be a death-blow to Activism.

FATHER

Then I'll do whatever it takes  
to get him, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN

Tell him about the health  
insurance and the pension plan.

EXT. DALTROBON - KAJA PHO'S HOME - DAY

Jakk is greeted at the door by KAJA PHO.

JAKK

See? I told you I'd come back.

KAJA PHO

Great. Where's Lita?

JAKK

She prefers to stay in the ship.

KAJA PHO

But--

JAKK

She's just not into you, Kaja.

The little alien ages and weakens before Jakk's eyes.

KAJA PHO

Then all is lost.

She trudges back into her house.

INT. KAJA PHO'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jakk follows Kaja down the hall.

JAKK

Aren't you happy to see ME?  
I'm a Star Knight Supreme!

Kaja stops and turns back.

KAJA PHO

You've been gone for a month.

JAKK

But my sword fighting skills  
and command of the Power are  
greater than ever.

KAJA PHO  
Not great enough to protect  
your hand, I see.

She heads into a room. Jakk follows shamefacedly.

INT. KAJA PHO'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kaja hobbles to her bed and lies down.

JAKK  
You're taking a NAP? I just  
got here! I came a hell of a  
long way to fulfill my promise.

KAJA PHO  
Well, that's what most  
important right now, isn't it?  
Not the fact that I'm DYING  
BEFORE YOUR EYES.

JAKK  
I mean, the fuel cost alone --  
wait, you're dying? Just  
because Lita broke your heart?

KAJA PHO  
I'm old, Jakk. Old and weak.  
In a year I'll be fifty-nine-  
and-a-half.  
(brightly)  
Pension eligible!  
(resignedly)  
Too bad it's a shitty pension.  
(brightly)  
That I'll never have to live  
on!  
(sadly)  
Oh....

JAKK

Fifty-nine-and-a half next year. So that means right now you're... Good lord! It's a miracle your brain isn't just dribbling out of your ears!

KAJA PHO

You're welcome.

JAKK

But Kaja, if you die, how will I--

(mumbles)

--complete my training?

KAJA PHO

I thought you didn't need any more training.

JAKK

(eyeing his  
hand)

Maybe a few pointers...

KAJA PHO

The truth is, you're as ready as you're ever going to be.

JAKK

Really?

KAJA PHO

No. But there's no one left to train you. So you could say, yes.

JAKK

Are you telling me I have to confront Dad Father before I can become a Star Knight Supreme?

KAJA PHO

No. But again, yes.

JAKK

Kaja, I need to hear it from you: Is Dad Father my... I mean, is the name just a freakish coincidence or what?

KAJA PHO

You're welcome.

JAKK

I knew it! This changes everything!

(beat)

What does it change?

Kaja's condition steadily worsens from here on.

KAJA PHO

He's going to try to recruit you into the IP. He'll tempt you with absolute Power. You have to resist, no matter what he's offering.

JAKK

I will.

(beat)

But no harm listening to the offer, right? As a courtesy?

KAJA PHO

He'll try to close the deal by introducing you to the Chairman. Don't be swayed by Lownert's charisma or his promise of stock options. If you are, you'll become an executive, like your father.

(beat)

Everything depends on you now, Jakk. There isn't anyone else. If you fail, Activism dies and your friends suffer horribly before dying.

Her body convulses and comes to rest. Her eyes close.

Then they pop open.

KAJA PHO  
No pressure, of course.

She dies.

EXT. KAJA PHO'S HOUSE - DAY

Jakk exits the house to find Lita approaching.

JAKK  
She's dead.

Lita squawks in alarm. She chatters sadly.

JAKK  
You changed your mind about  
her?

Lita nods.

JAKK  
Wow, sucks to be you. Although  
it really sucks to be me. Last  
of the Star Knights. Gotta  
kill my own dad.  
(beat)  
That part might be fun.

XEN WATANABI'S GHOST and KAJA GUGU'S GHOST appear.

XEN'S GHOST  
The outlook isn't as bleak as  
it might seem, Jakk.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST  
Although it is pretty bleak.

JAKK  
Xen! Kaja! You lied to me  
about my dad!

XEN'S GHOST

Your father abandoned his ideals to join the IP. He could have remained Jakk Spacebreaker, but he chose to call himself Dad Father. I suppose it had to do with branding. In any event, what I told you was true -- in a way.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

You'll find, Jakk, that much of what the elite refer to as "truth" or "demonstrable fact" or "scientifically sound conclusion" is merely a matter of opinion.

JAKK

I can't believe this. You mean my real name is JAKK JUNIOR?!

XEN'S GHOST

It's all my fault, of course.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

Not the name. Blame that on your mother.

XEN'S GHOST

Your father had enormous potential.

JAKK

But not as much as me, right?

XEN'S GHOST

Because I was arrogant, I felt certain I could train him.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

But Xen was wrong, and the galaxy has suffered.

XEN'S GHOST

I was just getting to that.

JAKK

But there's still hope for Dad.  
He hasn't completely sold out.  
I can sense that.

XEN'S GHOST

I'd like to believe you, Jakk,  
but your father is loyal to the  
Chairman. And he has a huge  
equity stake in the IP.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

Options worth trillions. He'd  
rather die than give that up.

JAKK

But I can't kill him.

XEN'S GHOST

You mustn't let your feelings  
stand in the way of what's  
necessary.

JAKK

No, I CAN'T kill him.  
Because...

(mumbles)

...he's better than me.

(normal voice)

How humiliating! He has a desk  
job, for god's sake!

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

But you've improved greatly  
since your first encounter.

JAKK

I have improved greatly. I'm  
really, really good at this  
Star Knight thing. Better than  
either of you, I bet!



XEN'S GHOST  
Perhaps a bit overconfident.

JAKK  
I just wish I didn't have to do  
this alone. I wish there were  
someone who could share the  
burdens of greatness with me.  
A good friend. A sibling.

Xen's ghost and Kaja Gugu's ghost look at each other.

XEN'S GHOST  
Did I forget to mention you  
have a sister?

JAKK  
Really?  
(beat)  
Please tell me it's Kia.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST  
It is.

JAKK  
Thank GOD! I knew there was  
something wrong about my  
attraction to her! Although  
any red-blooded dude...

He is racked by a series of shudders, far worse than  
any that have come before. And when they're over, he's  
free of the conflicting feelings that have hounded him.

JAKK  
Whew. I feel like a new man.

XEN'S GHOST  
It's important that you keep  
this a secret from your father.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST  
If he senses the truth, Kia  
will be in danger.

JAKK

But I was thinking I could  
train her to be a Star Knight.

XEN'S GHOST

Perhaps, in due time. But your  
confrontation with your father  
can't wait for that.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

Even as we speak, the Power is  
at work, shaping events so that  
your paths will soon cross.

JAKK

You two are getting along a lot  
better than the last time I saw  
you.

XEN'S GHOST

Yes, well...

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

We've fallen in love.

They smile at each other, and then at Jakk.

JAKK

No kidding!

(beat)

So how does that work?

XEN'S GHOST

We have many things in common.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

We're the only two like us.

XEN'S GHOST

And we've had a LOT of time to  
get to know each other.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

And work out our differences.

JAKK

Yeah, no, what I meant was, how  
does that work...you know...  
THAT way?

XEN'S GHOST

We haven't figured out how to  
have sex yet.

KAJA GUGU'S GHOST

We'll get there. We're not  
going anywhere.

EXT. SPACE

An Activist armada assembles around a large, heavily  
armed warship, the Occupy.

INT. OCCUPY - STRATEGY ROOM

Kia stands at the front of the room, waiting for  
everyone to settle in. Dozens of members of the  
Activist brain trust sit before her, including Don,  
Komba and Gaigan.

KIA

Let's get started. While I was  
away, Sureva Punapa planned our  
next move. She will now brief  
you on that operation.

Kia yields the floor to SUREVA PUNAPA, a beautiful,  
somber alien with red skin and mammalian features. Kia  
sits next to Don.

SUREVA

Our ability to attack MODESTO  
has been hampered by the  
secrecy in which the project  
has been shrouded. We've also  
faced a significant cash flow  
problem. But all of that is in  
the past now.

She uses a remote to call up a representation of  
MODESTO orbiting Embelex.

SUREVA

Thanks to the efforts of our comrades on Tanix, we now have the means to fund a major operation. And due to--

DON

\*Cough\*We also have Don Slovack back.\*Cough\*

SUREVA

I'm sorry?

DON

Nothing. Sorry. Just a-- Dry throat. \*Cough\*You heard me though right?\*Cough\*

SUREVA

Do you need some water?

DON

No, no. Please continue.  
\*Cough\*All that coughing for nothing.\*Cough\*

SUREVA

Due to the efforts of several double agents on Bonafo, we know where to find MODESTO and how to destroy it. We also know that the Chairman and President Father are there. In on assault we can destroy MODESTO and assassinate the two most evil men in the galaxy.

This sends a current of excitement through the room.

SUREVA

This is good news, for sure.  
But I must point out that many Bonafos--

Don falls into a coughing fit -- a real one, this time.

SUREVA

Many--

Kia pats him on the back, but it doesn't help.

SUREVA

(raising her  
voice)

Many Bonafos--

Don tries to apologize for the disruption.

SUREVA

MANY BONAFOS DIED TO BRING US  
THIS FUCKING INFORMATION!

She storms away in disgust -- nearly running into Don,  
who's headed out of the room.

Kia stands up to restore order.

KIA

Thank you. General Mustek?

GENERAL MUSTEK, a humanoid, takes the floor.

MUSTEK

The electromagnetic field  
protecting MODESTO is generated  
on nearby Embelex. Using an IP  
cargo ship we were able to buy  
at government auction, we will  
land an assault force on the  
planet. Its mission will be to  
destroy the field generator.  
The generator is heavily  
guarded and this mission will  
be extremely dangerous. Does  
anyone volunteer to lead the  
assault force?

KOMBA

(impishly)

Don said he'd do it.

KIA  
Well then I'm going too.

DON  
(re-entering the  
room)  
Going where?

INT. OCCUPY - STRATEGY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

DON  
I volunteered to do WHAT?!

KOMBA  
Come on, it'll be fun.

KIA  
Yeah. We get to blow shit up!

DON  
Now you sound like Jakk.

KIA  
I do, don't I? Well anyway,  
thank you General Mustek. And  
thank YOU, Don.  
(seductively)  
Your dedication to the cause  
will surely be...rewarded.

DON  
Oh boy.

KOMBA  
I told you it'd be fun.

KIA  
Now Admiral Jef will discuss  
the attack on MODESTO.

ADMIRAL JEF is an unassuming little bald-headed  
creature with tentacles instead of limbs. He comes  
forward on a hoverchair.

JEF

My title is Admiral but in fact  
I am a doctor. Now which one  
of you is the patient, please?

(notices  
schematic)

Ah yes, here we go, very well.  
Now as you can see from this  
magnetic resonance x-ray, the  
patient is clearly obese and in  
need of surgery. The only  
question is do we remove the  
head or will it be sufficient  
to simply stop feeding the  
patient until he overcomes his  
disgusting obsession with  
nourishment? Your thoughts?

KIA

Admiral--

JEF

As to this other matter, the  
bit about blowing up MODESTO:  
I require a pair of volunteers.

(points to a  
female alien)

You sir, please come forward.  
Don't worry, I don't bite. The  
suction cups do all the  
tenderizing. Now, one more  
volunteer, please, hm?

(indicating an  
alien sitting in  
a hoverchair)

You're an android, correct?

ALIEN (WINGO)

I'm your cousin Wingo!

JEF

Yes, I thought so. Please come  
forward and don't be alarmed.  
The first time we did this  
almost no one got hurt.

(as Wingo comes  
forward)  
No, not you, Wingo, what are  
you doing? The android, you  
fool! I want the android!

Wingo realizes Jef is referring to his hoverchair.

WINGO  
This?

JEF  
Yes, of course, I need it for  
the demonstration! No more  
delays, Wingo, they're not  
paying me by the hour!

Kia whispers something to Jef.

JEF  
(crestfallen)  
In fact they're not paying me  
at all.

Wingo lowers his hoverchair to the floor and slides  
off. The hoverchair moves to the front of the room.  
Jef begins directing the volunteers to act out the  
attack.

JEF  
Now you, android, will be  
playing the villain. I wish  
you had a mustache, but we'll  
just have to improvise...

While this goes on, Don turns to Gaigan.

DON  
So which poor slob has to try  
to execute this suicidal plan?

Gaigan clears his throat awkwardly.

DON  
Wow. You're a lot braver than  
I thought. Or a lot dumber.



GAIGAN

Actually, neither. I made a deal with Kia. I lead this mission, and in return our next target is the corporate headquarters of RoboDox.

DON

Your sister's company?

GAIGAN

They're our biggest competitor. And business is business, Don.

Meanwhile, at Admiral Jef's direction the female alien is smashing the hoverchair on the floor.

JEF

And there you have it. Victory! Or at least success.

KIA

Thanks, Admiral. Questions?

JAKK (O.S.)

I have one.

Jakk appears at the back of the room.

JAKK

Is there anyone in this room who's actually destroyed a mobile defense station before?

KIA

Jakk!

JAKK

Guilty as charged and ready to do it again!

Jakk is happily reunited with Kia, Don, Komba and Gaigan. He gives Kia a meaningful look.

KIA  
Something's different. What is  
it?

(beat)  
The awkwardness is gone. Why?  
(beat)  
Are you gay?

JAKK  
(flustered)  
Not a good time. We'll talk  
soon.

KIA  
Sure, of course.  
(aside to Don)  
I knew it!

INT. OCCUPY - HANGAR

Side by side in the hangar sit the Aeon Terodakta and an IP cargo ship. Don stands near the Terodakta, speaking with Gaigan. Kia is nearby, giving instructions to an AIDE.

DON  
Listen. I want you to take  
her. No kidding. Please take  
her! She's no use to me.

Kia overhears and presumes Don is talking about her. She continues to instruct the aide but her response to Don and Gaigan's conversation plays out on her face.

GAIGAN  
Okay, okay. I know it can't be  
easy for you to offer her to me  
like this, so thanks. You  
won't regret it. I know just  
how far I can push her, so I'll  
get everything I can out of  
that smelly, noisy bitch.

Kia's fury mounts as this goes on.

DON

Yeah, she could use some work,  
I know. Just haven't had time  
to strip her down.

GAIGAN

At the very least she's long  
overdue for a lube.

KIA

Like he'll get anywhere near my  
parts now!

DON

But she's still the fastest  
ship in the fleet.

Kia realizes she's been mistaken.

AIDE

Madam Princess?

KIA

(irritated)

What?!

INT. CARGO SHIP - COCKPIT

Don and Komba are in the pilots' seats, gearing up for  
takeoff. Jakk and Kia sit behind them.

Don watches the Terodakta taxi out of the hangar.

DON

Well, there she goes. I'm a  
little worried I'll never see  
her again. We've been through  
so much together. I really  
feel like she's a part of me.  
I hope she'll be okay.

KIA

Now I kind of wish you HAD been  
talking about me.

DON

What?

EXT. OCCUPY - HANGAR EXIT

The cargo ship exits the Occupy.

INT. MODESTO - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE OFFICE SUITE

On his way in President Father passes under a sign reading "Bizny Executive Office Suite."

INT. BIZNY EXECUTIVE OFFICE SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Father approaches the desk of Chairman Lownert.

CHAIRMAN

How do you like my new office?

FATHER

Very impressive.

CHAIRMAN

Bizny donated the materials and the labor, so there's no cost to the taxpayers.

FATHER

Did they make the desk, too?

CHAIRMAN

No, it's a Wegma Workspace.

FATHER

Those things aren't cheap.

CHAIRMAN

So I'm told.

FATHER

Was it a donation too? Or is Wegma hoping you'll give them an exclusive contract to supply MODESTO with productivity solutions?

CHAIRMAN

Is that cynicism, Mr. President? I don't think I've heard that tone since you were a young Star Knight protecting a corrupt regime.

FATHER

My apologies. Every time I think the last trace of Watanabi's poisonous influence has disappeared, something happens to remind me otherwise.

CHAIRMAN

Don't be too hard on yourself. Our failures strengthen us -- provided we learn from them.

FATHER

You've read my report?

CHAIRMAN

Yes, but the rumors of an attack on Sefenta don't concern me. What I'd like you to do is contact our main task force and let them know they'll be deploying shortly.

FATHER

What can I tell them about their destination?

CHAIRMAN

As much as they need to know, which is nothing.

FATHER

What can you tell me about it?

CHAIRMAN

I've already answered you.

FATHER  
(taken aback)  
I see.

CHAIRMAN  
You'll understand my reasoning  
soon enough.  
(conciliatory)  
Would you like to try out my  
Workspace?

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE EMBELEX

The cargo ship approaches Embelex.

INT. CARGO SHIP - COCKPIT

Don presses a button to transmit the security code.

DON  
Okay, cross your fingers. If  
this code doesn't work, things  
are gonna get nasty.

A tense moment, followed by:

OFFICIOUS PRICK (O.S.)  
Cargo ship, this is Embelex  
Base. You are cleared to  
proceed.

Don turns off his com terminal. The four of them  
breathe a collective sigh of relief.

DON  
It worked!

KOMBA  
Cool.

KIA  
Yes!

JAKK  
Yippee!

(off the others'  
looks)  
That's what we always said on  
Tanix.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE EMBELEX

The cargo ship begins its descent.

INT. EMBELEX BASE - SECURITY OFFICE

The OFFICIOUS PRICK sits at a workstation, next to a  
LIEUTENANT.

LIEUTENANT  
Begging your pardon, sir, but  
that code is completely bogus.  
It could be anyone up there on  
that ship. Why are you letting  
them through?

OFFICIOUS PRICK  
(mimicking Dad  
Father)  
I don't care who's on the ship,  
Lieutenant. The President  
busted me down to security  
detail on this shithole of a  
planet for doing my job the  
right way, so fuck him raw.

EXT. EMBELEX - FOREST CLEARING - DAY

The cargo ship sits in a large forest clearing. Jakk,  
Kia, Don, Komba and the androids exit the vessel.

EXT. EMBELEX - FOREST NEAR SMALL CLEARING - LATER

Kia leads the team through the forest. She spies  
something ahead and motions for everyone to get down.

She directs the others' eyes to a pair of peacekeepers  
in the distance. They're sitting in a small clearing.  
Their hoverboards (about the size of snowboards, but  
sturdier) float nearby.

Because the peacekeepers have removed their helmets, we can see that one is male and the other is female. They're having a romantic picnic. Their rifles lean against a tree.

KIA

Kill them now or kill them  
later, in the main assault?

JAKK

You really have to ask?

DON

(to Jakk)

You did most of the killing on  
Tanix. How about letting  
somebody else have a turn?

Jakk smiles and indicates "be my guest."

DON

Come on, Komba.

KOMBA

Don't have to ask me twice to  
kill humans.

EXT. SMALL CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

As Don and Komba approach the peacekeepers, Komba produces a knife and hands it to Don. Don mouths "What about you?" Komba elaborately pantomimes pulling someone apart with his hands.

Before he and Don can attack, Komba stumbles and falls. The peacekeepers are alerted. They look at each other meaningfully.

MALE PEACEKEEPER

Raincheck?

The female peacekeeper smiles and runs for her hoverboard.



The male peacekeeper goes for the rifles, but Don throws the knife and pins his hand to the tree. The 'keeper reaches for the rifle with his other hand, but Don shoots him dead.

Meanwhile the female peacekeeper mounts her hoverboard and takes off, only to get quickly shot down by Komba.

EXT. FOREST NEAR THE SMALL CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

As Kia and Jakk watch the scene play out, Kia notices two more peacekeepers very close by, on hoverboards, coming to investigate. She points them out to Jakk.

KIA

We have to deal with those two.

JAKK

Right.

KIA

Can't wait to ride one of those boards!

They run at the peacekeepers. Kia shoots one of them, knocking him off his board. The other peacekeeper's gun jams. He takes off at high speed. Kia and Jakk jump on the other board and follow him.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Kia controls the hoverboard while Jakk shoots at the fleeing peacekeeper. Hunter and hunted frantically dodge obstacles as they zip through the woods.

JAKK

We need to get closer!

Kia gets them closer. Jakk lines up a shot, only to have a tree branch jostle his arm when he fires.

Two more peacekeepers on hoverboards happen upon the chase. They fall in behind Kia and Jakk and begin shooting at them. Kia goes into evasive maneuvers.

Jakk leaps off the board and grabs a tree limb. He swings like a gymnast and launches himself at one of the pursuing peacekeepers' boards. He knocks the peacekeeper off the board and into a tree. The other peacekeeper starts shooting at Jakk, who speeds away on the board.

Kia chases her quarry into another part of the woods. She nicks his board with her gun. But then he reverses his engines and she zooms by, headed directly for a mammoth tree trunk. In desperation Kia jumps off her board and lands, hard, on the forest floor. She's unconscious. The peacekeeper sneers in triumph.

PEACEKEEPER

Women pilots!

He's so busy gloating that he doesn't see the tree he smashes into.

In another part of the woods, Jakk and the final peacekeeper continue their duel. Neither of them can hit the other with his gun, but their shots wreak havoc in the forest. Branches and critters and birds get cut down by laser fire.

Jakk puts away his gun and draws his laser sword. He flies ahead of the peacekeeper and begins slicing through every passing trunk in an effort to get one of the falling trees to smash the enemy. A dozen huge, stately trees cascade to the forest floor -- but the peacekeeper eludes them all.

JAKK

Why won't you DIE?!

PEACEKEEPER

Too much to live for! A smart,  
beautiful wife, four amazing--

A large forest predator, a wookalar, leaps up and snatches the peacekeeper right off his board.

PEACEKEEPER

--aiiee!

Jakk turns his board around and heads back toward the small clearing.

EXT. SMALL CLEARING - LATER

Don, Komba and the androids await Kia and Jakk.

As Eighty-eight speaks, a large, disgusting insect-like thing lands on his head and crawls down his face.

88-XOR

(to Lita)

So what do you know about the organisms on this planet?

(off Lita's response)

"Not as much as I'm about to"?

AUUGGH! Kill it, Lita!

So Lita punches Eighty-eight in the face, smashing the bug and splattering bright-orange viscera everywhere.

88-XOR

(sarcastically)

Great job. Thank you.

DON

(to Komba)

What's taking them so long?

You don't think they're...

KOMBA

(knowingly)

Hurt? Dead?

(ominously)

Having at it?

DON

Don't even think such a thing!

Jakk lands his board in the clearing.

DON

Where's Kia?!

(beat)  
I mean -- Jakk, thank god  
you're alive!

(beat)  
But where's Kia?

JAKK  
We had to split up.

DON  
Great! Wait -- in what sense?

JAKK  
Huh?

KOMBA  
We'd better go find her. She  
IS the most important member of  
this team, after all.

(to Jakk)  
Point us in the right  
direction.

(to himself)  
Or should we follow Don's dick?

Led by Jakk, the team leaves the clearing.

EXT. REMOTE PART OF THE FOREST - LATER

Still unconscious, Kia has a vivid dream.

KIA  
Oh, Don.... Oh, Jakk....  
(shudders)  
And you too, Komba....  
(beat)  
Yes, all three of you.... Why  
the hell not?

YUB YUB (O.S.)  
Hey! You all right?

Kia's eyes open and she sits up, startled. Standing  
next to her is a small, bipedal, fox-like creature  
called an Ayeegah.

KIA

Who are you?

YUB YUB

My name's Yub Yub. What's yours?

KIA

Sorry, I don't understand.

YUB YUB

(slowly)

My name's Yub Yub. What's your name?

KIA

Too bad Eighty-eight isn't here. He knows just about every language in the galaxy.

YUB YUB

I SPEAK YOUR LANGUAGE.

KIA

You seem friendly, though. How can I ask you where we are in a way you'll comprehend?

YUB YUB

I'm using the same words!

Kia smiles at him condescendingly.

KIA

Well, I guess we'll figure out a way to communicate, huh?

Yub Yub gives her a frustrated, disbelieving look.

KIA

You're awfully cute, you know. You want something to eat?

She produces an energy bar.

KIA  
Food? Yum yum?

YUB YUB  
What the blurg is wrong with  
you?!

KIA  
Okay, well, you let me know if  
you change your mind.

YUB YUB  
Oh for-- Wait a minute.

Yub Yub listens intently to the noises of the woods.

KIA  
What is it? Something wrong?

YUB YUB  
(whispering)  
Shut up, you blurging idiot!

Yub Yub grabs Kia by the hand.

PEACEKEEPER (O.S.)  
Don't move! Either of you.

Kia and Yub Yub turn to see a PEACEKEEPER holding a gun  
on them.

PEACEKEEPER  
Who are you? What are you  
doing?

YUB YUB  
I was born on this planet. Who  
the blurg are YOU?

PEACEKEEPER  
(to Kia)  
What's it saying?

YUB YUB  
You too? Really?

PEACEKEEPER  
(sticking the  
gun in Yub Yub's  
face)  
I told you don't move!

With unexpected quickness and strength, Yub Yub grabs the peacekeeper by the wrist and slams him to the ground, knocking him unconscious.

YUB YUB  
Did you understand THAT?!

KIA  
Nice work, little guy. How  
about we get out of here before  
he wakes up?

Yub Yub smiles and nods exaggeratedly. Then he leads her to the peacekeeper's hoverboard.

Kia watches amusedly as Yub Yub climbs on the board.

KIA  
You telling me you know how to  
operate one of these things?

Yub Yub smiles and nods. Then he turns away from her and rolls his eyes.

INT. MODESTO - BIZNY EXECUTIVE OFFICE SUITE

Chairman Lownert finishes up a com terminal transmission as President Father enters the office.

CHAIRMAN  
Yes, what is it?

FATHER  
My apologies for the  
interruption, but -- for  
reasons not worth getting into  
-- a rag-tag band of Activists  
has managed to land on Embelex.

CHAIRMAN

I understand, but -- for  
reasons not worth getting into  
-- there's no need for concern.

FATHER

My son is with them?.

CHAIRMAN

How do you know this?

FATHER

For reasons not worth getting  
into -- I just do.

CHAIRMAN

Well. It's interesting that  
you're suddenly so attuned to a  
child you abandoned -- for  
reasons not worth getting into  
-- before he was born.

FATHER

Abandoned? I thought he died  
with my wife.

CHAIRMAN

Yes, I suppose you did think  
that.

FATHER

You suppose? I have been loyal  
to you for nineteen years, Mr.  
Chairman.

CHAIRMAN

Less than half your life, in  
other words.

FATHER

(stung)

I don't know how to respond to  
that.



The Chairman holds Father's eye for a moment. Then his expression softens.

CHAIRMAN

Excuse me for being curt. I was in the middle of a hugely important conversation when you showed up.

FATHER

Oh?

CHAIRMAN

Not worth getting into.

(beat)

Not yet, anyway. All will be revealed to you in time. Why don't you go to Embelex? It's clear young Spacebreaker is looking for you, and--

FATHER

For reasons not worth...?

CHAIRMAN

(nodding and smiling)

--it's in our best interests that he find you sooner rather than later.

FATHER

Very well.

CHAIRMAN

Please know, Mr. President, that you have my complete confidence.

FATHER

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

He turns and leaves.

FATHER

(aside)

A vote of confidence? I'm in  
bigger trouble than I thought.

EXT. EMBELEX - DEEP FOREST - DAY

Walking about 10 meters apart, Jakk, Don, Komba and the  
androids search the woods for signs of Kia.

DON

(to Jakk)

Anything?

JAKK

No. You?

DON

No. Komba?

KOMBA

If I'd found something,  
wouldn't I have told you?

DON

So, no then?

Komba ignores that.

DON

Eighty-eight? See anything  
over there?

88-XOR

Other than enormous quantities  
of--

(sidestepping)

--animal waste? I can't say  
that I have, doll.

DON

What about Lita, then? She  
seen anything?

KOMBA

All this idiocy makes me have  
to piss.

He assumes the position behind the nearest big tree.  
Don notices and becomes irritated.

DON

Komba! What are you doing?  
You're falling behind!

KOMBA

Do NOT bother me right now.

Having finished, Komba steps out from behind the tree,  
which is withered and smoking.

KOMBA

(sniffs)  
Hey, wait a minute.  
(sniffs)  
I smell animal carcass. Also  
known as lunch.

He follows his nose away from the others.

DON

Komba!! Where are you going?

Jakk notices Don and follows him.

JAKK

Where are we going?

Lita burbles a question.

88-XOR

Why shouldn't we follow them?  
They OBVIOUSLY know what  
they're doing.

Lita chuckles as the androids head off after the  
others. Eighty-eight's progress is quickly halted by a  
squishing sound.

88-XOR  
(looking at his  
beshitted feet)  
Nature's bounty.  
(off Lita's  
comment)  
Oh shut up.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The androids catch up to the others as they stop near a tree. On the ground lies a medium-sized dead animal.

88-XOR  
I hope it's the thing whose  
feces I just stepped in.

KOMBA  
Well, too bad.

DON  
Whaddya mean?

KOMBA  
Are you kidding? It's a trap.

DON  
Aw, come on. You're getting  
paranoid in your old age.

Don starts toward the carcass.

JAKK  
Beat you to it!

DON  
Oh no you don't!

KOMBA  
Get away from there, dumbasses!

No sooner have Jakk and Don taken two steps than the trap is triggered and the ground opens up beneath them. The hole is wide enough to catch Komba and the androids too.

After the dust settles, the five of them find themselves about fifteen feet below ground level. Komba is sprawled over the androids, obscuring them.

DON  
(eyeing the  
carcass)  
Well at least there's food.  
(off Komba's  
look)  
What?

JAKK  
(gesturing  
upward)  
I think we're the food, guys.

Don and Komba look up to see that the rim of the pit is surrounded by Ayeegahs brandishing primitive weapons. The Ayeegah leader, NUB NUB, addresses the others.

NUB NUB  
(to his  
companions)  
He thinks we wanna eat them!

This sets off titters among the Ayeegahs.

NUB NUB  
(to Jakk)  
No, man, we wanna eat a  
wookalar -- and you three  
ruined our trap!

DON  
What are they saying?

JAKK  
No language I've ever heard.

The Ayeegahs look at each other, befuddled.

NUB NUB  
Is this some kind of a joke?

DON  
DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE WORDS  
THAT ARE COMIN' OUTTA MY MOUTH?

NUB NUB  
What the blurg, man?

The Ayeegahs chatter heatedly.

88-XOR  
(muffled)  
You know I might be able to  
translate -- IF KOMBA WOULD  
JUST GET OFF OF ME.

KOMBA  
I thought the ground felt like  
a whiny bitch.

Komba gets up, revealing the androids beneath him. A  
hush falls on the Ayeegahs.

NUB NUB  
Whoa. No way.

More chatter among the Ayeegahs, but this time excited.

NUB NUB  
We've heard about androids, but  
we've never seen any before.  
(beat)  
Can you help us catch a  
wookalar?

JAKK  
What's it saying?

88-XOR gives Lita a quick glance, then proceeds.

88-XOR  
(prompting Nub  
Nub)  
He...?

NUB NUB

Nub Nub.

88-XOR

Nub Nub says that I...am a god.

Lita interjects something.

88-XOR

That Lita and I are gods.

(to Lita)

Wouldn't you be a goddess?

(off Lita's  
response)

She says that if she were a  
medical practitioner we  
wouldn't call her a doctress,  
so why should we call her a  
goddess?

NUB NUB

I never said either of you was  
a god!

DON

They seem kinda agitated.

88-XOR

And who wouldn't be, in the  
presence of the Almighty? Er,  
Almighties?

The Ayeegahs grow restless. Eighty-eight makes a "Hold  
on" gesture.

88-XOR

Since it isn't every day that  
gods walk among us, the...?

NUB NUB

Ayeegahs.

88-XOR

Ayeegahs have generously agreed  
to set you free -- provided  
that you help them catch a  
wookalar.

Nub Nub breaks into a smile. The Ayeegahs murmur  
happily.

DON

That's all we have to do?

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST - LATER

The androids and the Ayeegahs watch from a safe vantage  
point while Jakk, Don and Komba struggle to subdue a  
wookalar. The animal, which is at least 10 feet tall  
and 15 feet long, has spikes all over its body, a  
nearly impenetrable hide, and an extremely nasty  
disposition. Multiple laser blasts and blows from  
Jakk's sword weaken the beast, but the hunters take a  
severe beating in return.

EXT. FOREST - OUTSIDE AYEEGAH SETTLEMENT - LATER

A raucous procession makes its way to the settlement.  
The androids are being carried on the shoulders of the  
Ayeegahs. Meanwhile, Jakk, Don and Komba, sweaty,  
dirty, bruised and exhausted, drag the dead wookalar.

EXT. AYEEGAH SETTLEMENT - COMMONS - MOMENTS LATER

The settlement is made up of simple huts.

Ayeegahs eagerly gather in the commons as the  
procession arrives. Eighty-eight and Lita are given  
seats of honor. Jakk, Don and Komba dump the wookalar  
at the feet of the androids.

JAKK

Okay, Eighty-eight, you've had  
your fun.

88-XOR

"And you got us out of that  
trap."



JAKK

And blah blah blah. Time for  
us to go.

NUB NUB

Hey, man, you can't leave yet.  
You have to stay for the feast!

88-XOR

They want us to eat with them.

KOMBA

After what it took to kill that  
thing, why not?

JAKK

But we still have to find Kia.

DON

He's right, Komba.

NUB NUB

Who's Kia?

88-XOR

A female like those two. Not a  
god.

Yub Yub comes forward.

YUB YUB

Female?

88-XOR

You've seen her?

EXT. YUB YUB'S HUT - MOMENTS LATER

Jakk, Don, Komba and the androids, as well as Nub Nub,  
wait outside Yub Yub's hut.

The door opens and out comes Yub Yub leading Kia, whose  
hands and feet are bound. She has a piece of fruit in  
her mouth.

DON & JAKK

Kia!

KOMBA

(unmoved)

Lady person.

88-XOR

Why is she bound and gagged?

YUB YUB

She was gonna be dessert.

JAKK

What'd he say?

88-XOR

(aside to Yub

Yub)

But I was under the impression  
you didn't eat humans.

YUB YUB

Only females, and only on  
special occasions.

88-XOR

I see.

DON

What's he saying, Eighty-eight?

88-XOR

(to Jakk)

In a minute or so I'm going to  
need to demonstrate my god-like  
abilities.

Jakk gets the hint and nods.

88-XOR

Yub Yub, Nub Nub: I wasn't kidding earlier. I really am a deity -- not now, Lita! -- and I'm going to have to insist that you free Kia and take her off the menu. Or else.

NUB NUB

Or else what?

Nub Nub is lifted off the ground, swung around by his tail, and sent flying over the trees.

This is more of a demonstration than 88-XOR had in mind, but he keeps his composure. Meanwhile, Yub Yub is scared out of his wits.

88-XOR

So you see...I'm really quite nasty when you get to know me.

EXT. COMMONS - NIGHT

The feast is taking place as planned. Kia, Jakk, Don, Komba and the androids are seated in places of honor. Jakk keeps stealing glances at Kia and brooding. Don keeps stealing glances at Jakk stealing glances at Kia -- and brooding. Kia keeps feeling as if she's being watched...twice over.

Meanwhile, the Ayeegahs are taking great pains to keep their guests happy, lest Eighty-eight's temper flare up again. And Nub Nub, whose head and one arm are heavily bandaged, sits as far away as possible.

DON

Well, this worked out all right. Tomorrow morning we'll be rested, resupplied and ready to take out that field generator, right on schedule.

88-XOR

Which reminds me, Yub Yub has offered to show us a shortcut to the IP base.

(eyeing Jakk)

And I didn't even have to hurt him.

Jakk gets up from the table and wanders off.

88-XOR

(to Lita)

He's probably looking for a baby to torture. Which, by the way, where are all the babies? How can all these Ayeegahs be the same age?

Lita doesn't know.

Kia takes off after Jakk. Don sadly watches her go.

DON

(to Komba)

I think I'm losing her, pal.

Komba is too busy wrestling with wookalar meat to care.

KOMBA

Killing the wookalar was more fun than eating it.

EXT. DESERTED PART OF THE SETTLEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Kia comes upon Jakk brooding.

KIA

Jakk, what is it?

JAKK

Dealing with some heavy shit.

KIA

It's perfectly fine that you're gay. Kind of makes me feel better about that kiss of ours.

JAKK

Gay?!

KIA

What? Who said that? Somebody must be throwing my voice!

JAKK

Kia, Dad Father is on Embelex.

KIA

How can you know that?

JAKK

In case you forgot, I have mad Power skills. And to a much, much lesser extent, far less than me, so does he. So we're like connected.

KIA

Which could jeopardize the mission!

JAKK

I know, right? So I gotta go confront him. Keep his focus on me instead of all of you. And then deal with the other thing.

KIA

What other thing?

(beat)

You're both gay!

JAKK

He's my father.

KIA

He's your father!

(beat)

Dad Father is your father?

JAKK

It gets worse. I have to try recruit him to our cause. It's our only hope of removing the Chairman from power. If I can't recruit Dad, I have to kill him. And in the event that he kills me instead, you will become Activism's last hope. You will have to confront Father and--

KIA

Seduce him.

JAKK

Reveal that you're his daughter.

KIA

WHAT?!

JAKK

WHAT?!

After a moment of stunned silence, Kia vomits.

JAKK

Are you okay?

KIA

Actually, I feel a lot better. Probably shouldn't have eaten wookalar in the first place.

(remembers what  
made her vomit)

Wait -- Dad Father is MY father?! And I was ready to.... Ugh! Gross!

(beat)

Are you SURE he's my father?

JAKK

He's your father. Which means I'm your brother.

KIA  
(vomiting again)  
WOOKALAR!

JAKK  
I wish I hadn't had to burden  
you with all this. But at  
least now I'm not the only one  
dealing with it.

KIA  
(weakly)  
Well, there's that.

JAKK  
I don't mean to run off, but  
the sooner I go, the better.  
You sure you'll be all right?

KIA  
Go, go.

JAKK  
This all seems pretty awful  
right now, but...we'll laugh  
about it some day. You wait.

KIA  
(wryly)  
Looking forward to it.

Jakk steals away. Kia collects herself. Don arrives.

DON  
Hey. Everything okay?

Her face pale and drawn, her hair disheveled, puddles  
of vomit at her feet, Kia just stares at him.

DON  
Now what'd I do wrong?

EXT. EMBELEX - IP BASE - LANDING PAD - DAY

The base is surrounded by forest. In the background, a cluster of transmitter towers generates the EM field.

In the foreground, an IP shuttle sits on the landing pad. Exiting the shuttle is Dad Father. He is met immediately by a COMMANDER.

COMMANDER

Excuse me, Mr. President,  
there's someone here to see  
you. He says he's a...Star  
Knight Supreme.

FATHER

(amusedly)

The kid doesn't lack for ego,  
I'll give him that. Bring him  
to the conference room.

INT. IP BASE - CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Father stands near a long conference table. The doors open and Jakk is ushered in by the commander. Jakk's hands are restrained.

COMMANDER

(holds out  
Jakk's sword)

We confiscated this from him.

Father uses the Power to pull the sword into his hand.

FATHER

That will be all, Commander.

The commander exits. Father approaches Jakk.

FATHER

So, here we are.

JAKK

Here we are...Dad. Birth dad.

FATHER

I knew you couldn't go on  
denying it.



JAKK

How does it feel to be a  
father...JAKK?

FATHER

I still don't understand how  
it's possible. Your mother was  
only a few months pregnant when  
she died. Or so I'm told.

JAKK

Take a lot more than premature  
delivery to kill me.

Father ignites Jakk's sword and points it at him.

FATHER

A laser sword might do the  
trick, though, hm?

JAKK

Probably shouldn't have let the  
commander take that off me.  
But you don't have the guts to  
kill me, old man!

FATHER

I'm like fifty, you know.

JAKK

You had your chance before and  
you couldn't do it. Why?  
Because you hate your life!  
You hate being the servant of  
an unappreciative public. You  
hate all the bureaucracy. And  
you hate being the Chairman's  
errand boy! So when you look  
at me, you see what you could  
have been. And you'll never be  
able to bring yourself to kill  
that.

Seething with anger, Father raises the sword menacingly.

FATHER

WON'T I?

JAKK

What the fuck, Dad? I worked a long time on that speech!

Father makes Jakk sweat it out for a moment. Then he deactivates the sword and relaxes.

FATHER

You're a threat to the galaxy.

JAKK

You can be one, too!

FATHER

Hiro tried to lead me down that path. He failed, and you've failed, too. I can't leave. I was hoping you'd join me.

JAKK

Not a chance, Pops.

FATHER

The Chairman will change your mind.

JAKK

No, Dad. Why don't you join me?

FATHER

I'm a lost cause. If I were to step down from the presidency, there'd be no way I could maintain the lifestyle I've grown accustomed to. And once you realize how much a position in the IP can offer you, you'll make the same choice I made.

EXT. EMBELEX - FOREST SURROUNDING IP BASE - DAY

Yub Yub leads Kia, Don, Komba and the androids through the woods. Lagging behind the team is poor Nub Nub.

DON

I'd feel a lot better about  
this mission if Jakk were here.

KIA

Me too.

Kia walks ahead.

DON

(to Komba)

So would you say that was "Me  
too" as in "I agree with you,  
Don"? Or "Me too" as in "I'm  
in love with Jakk"?

KOMBA

I think it was "Me too" as in  
"Leave me alone, Don."

DON

Wait -- who's saying "Leave me  
alone," Kia or you?

KOMBA

Why can't it be both?

Yub Yub brings the party to a vantage point overlooking the rear entrance to the base. There are four peacekeepers by the door.

Kia, Don and Komba study the layout.

KIA

Well, the Ayeegahs did their  
part. Now it's our turn.

DON

No offense, big guy, but why don't you leave those guards to Kia and me? You're not exactly the stealthy type.

KOMBA

Looks like the walking wounded has another idea.

Following Komba's gaze, Don and Kia spot Nub Nub working his way through the woods, on a direct heading for the peacekeepers.

EXT. SPACE

The Activist armada moves through space, led by the warship Occupy and the Aeon Terodakta.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Gaigan is at the controls. His co-pilot is a dour, defeatist humanoid named FRAMB WEYSA, who speaks a buzzing, sputtering language.

GAIGAN

Ready, Framb?

Framb will never be ready.

GAIGAN

Yes, it's too late to change your mind. Or surrender.

Framb grimaces.

GAIGAN

(into com  
terminal)

The attack force is ready,  
Admiral.

JEF (O.S.)

Very well, then, let us proceed. All contraptions prepare for hyperwarp.

Framb raises one of his many concerns.

GAIGAN

Of course the EM field will be  
deactivated. Don has never--

(beat)

He won't let me down this time.

Not what Framb wanted to hear.

JEF (O.S.)

Annnndddd...commence with the  
superspeeding!

Gaigan pushes a button and the Terodakta goes into  
hyperwarp.

EXT. SPACE

The entire armada follows suit.

EXT. EMBELEX - IP BASE - WOODS NEAR REAR ENTRANCE - DAY

The rest of the team watches in apprehension as Nub Nub  
approaches the peacekeepers.

PEACEKEEPER

What happened to you?

Nub Nub quietly explodes, killing the guards.

Kia and company look on, stunned. Yub Yub smiles  
approvingly at the carnage.

KIA

Where'd he get a stealth  
detonator?

(sees Don  
searching his  
utility belt)

Oh.

88-XOR

(to Yub Yub)

Quite a sacrifice he made.

YUB YUB

It was that or get eaten by us  
after we run out of Wookalar.

Yub Yub smiles adorably at 88-XOR.

INT. MODESTO - BIZNY EXECUTIVE OFFICE SUITE

The doors open to admit Dad Father and Jakk.

CHAIRMAN

Jakk Spacebreaker Junior. I'm  
honored to meet the newest  
member of our management team.

(eyeing Jakk's  
restraints)

But where are my manners?

He makes a small hand gesture and a beautiful female  
SERVANT arrives to remove Jakk's restraints, give his  
wrists a quick massage, and then kiss him lightly on  
the lips before returning to her spot next to a wall.

JAKK

(acting like he  
didn't enjoy it)

That was a little show-offy.

CHAIRMAN

True. But I've worked hard to  
earn executive perks, and I'm  
not ashamed to show them  
off...or share them.

JAKK

I'll never be part of your  
team. If that's your plan,  
you're gonna be disappointed.  
I'm not weak like my dad.

Father lets the insult pass. The Chairman comes out  
from behind his desk and stands face to face with Jakk.

CHAIRMAN

Your father has strength far  
beyond your reckoning. He has  
overcome tremendous adversity  
to reach his lofty position.

Father stands up a little straighter.

CHAIRMAN

As for my plan, let's just say  
the details are forthcoming.

(to Father)

His sword, Mr. President.

Father hands Jakk's sword to the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN

I'd like to keep this as a  
token of the IP's triumph.  
Once you've accepted our offer,  
Activism will die.

JAKK

Activism will never die. But  
the three of us will, sooner  
than you realize.

CHAIRMAN

You mean when the EM field is  
disabled and an Activist armada  
shows up to destroy MODESTO?

JAKK

(shaken)

No idea what you're talking  
about.

CHAIRMAN

None of that is going to  
happen. Your double agents  
obtained only the information I  
wanted them to have.

JAKK

So they died for nothing?

CHAIRMAN

The generator on Embelex is heavily guarded, and the garrison expects your friends' attack. When the armada arrives, MODESTO will be fully protected...and the IP's main battle group will be ready for an assault of its own. Soon your friends will be in custody and your armada will be destroyed. And then you'll have to ask yourself: Whose side do I want to be on? The winners or the losers?

Jakk eyes his sword.

FATHER

See how it's done, Jakk?  
Nobody closes like the  
Chairman.

CHAIRMAN

Come. Walk with me. I have  
something to show you.

He leads them into a private elevator.

EXT. EMBELEX - IP BASE - REAR ENTRANCE - DAY

Kia, Don and Komba approach the rear entrance, which has a regular-size door set into a much larger one.

DON

Bypass security and we're in.

KIA

Maybe Lita should do it.

DON

We don't have time for her to  
go falling in love with another  
operating system.



EXT. FOREST NEAR REAR ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

As the androids and Yub Yub watch from a safe distance, the large rear door opens to reveal a huge contingent of peacekeepers led by a CAPTAIN.

EXT. REAR ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

CAPTAIN  
Drop your weapons!

Kia, Don and Komba comply.

EXT. FOREST NEAR REAR ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The androids and Yub Yub watch an even bigger peacekeeping force emerge from the woods behind the base. There are hundreds of soldiers along with armored vehicles, heavy weapons, etc.

88-XOR  
(whispering)  
Mother FUCK.  
(mortified)  
Excuse me.

YUB YUB  
(quietly)  
Stay here. We'll be back.

He slips away.

88-XOR  
"We"?

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO

The Activist armada exits hyperwarp. The attack force falls into formation. The support vessels hang back.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

GAIGAN  
(into com  
terminal)  
All fighters stand by. Admiral  
Jef, we're ready when you are.

INT. OCCUPY - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Jef and Sureva hover/stand before a tactical display.

JEF  
(into PC)  
One moment, please.  
(to Sureva)  
And you're SURE we don't get a  
bonus for winning the battle?

Sureva curtly indicates "No."

JEF  
Awww...  
(dejectedly)  
Go ahead with the fighting,  
then. And may the Power reward  
us. Since no one else will.

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO

The attack force heads for MODESTO.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Framb Weysa expresses concern to Gaigan.

GAIGAN  
What do you mean the scanner  
isn't working? How will we  
know if the field's down?

Framb replies.

GAIGAN  
We're being jammed? But that  
means...

(into com  
terminal)  
All units, something's wrong!  
Pull up! Pull up!

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO

The attack force pulls up hard, narrowly averting the EM field. Except for one fighter, which can't quite execute the maneuver. As soon as it enters the field, its electronics are zapped and it blows up. We hear a WILHELM SCREAM.

INT. OCCUPY - BRIDGE

GAIGAN (O.S.)  
Wilhelm didn't make it but  
everybody else is okay. What  
do we do now?

JEF  
Assemble in Sector 37! Or is  
it 45? These humanoid numbers  
are so confusing!

An AIDE studying a scanner reports:

AIDE  
A large enemy force has just  
emerged from hyperwarp!

JEF  
Oh my god IT'S A TRAP!  
(beat)  
Right? What else could it be?

Sureva turns an icy glare on the admiral. As she speaks she is transformed by her rage.

SUREVA  
Do you mean to tell me...that  
all those Bonafo spies died...  
FOR NOTHING?!

JEF  
Don't kill me!

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

The IP fleet is clearly visible through the cockpit.

Framb mutters something pessimistic.

GAIGAN

You know what, Framb? With  
that kind of attitude--

He sees dozens of Liberator fighters approaching.

GAIGAN

Never mind, you're right, we're  
fucked. Evasive action!

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO

The Liberators swarm the Activist attack force.

INT. MODESTO - POWER CENTER

The Chairman leads Father and Jakk out of the elevator.

CHAIRMAN

I call it the Power Center.

Father and Jakk take in the large but sparsely  
furnished room. There's a simple desk equipped with a  
computer, and behind the desk there's a large display.

CHAIRMAN

When you're accountable to two  
trillion stakeholders, it can  
be a little overwhelming.  
After 19 years, I think I've  
earned some private time. This  
is where I'll take it.

With a subtle hand gesture he turns on the display,  
which shows the space battle in progress.

CHAIRMAN

As you can see, Jakk, the IP is vigorously defending itself against your comrades. And the EM field has not been disabled.

The Chairman sets Jakk's sword on the desk.

CHAIRMAN

Now would be a very good time for you to accept our offer. Join us and the fighting ends.

Jakk struggles with his feelings.

FATHER

The signing bonus alone is a billion credits. More than most people earn in a dozen lifetimes. And then the equity...my god....

The Chairman sits down in front of the computer.

CHAIRMAN

I can have the bonus deposited in an off-system account in your name. You only have to say yes. And once you've come aboard, you'll quickly discover that the true reward of the work is the power. An entire galaxy yours to command. Can you imagine how it might feel to wield such power? Your father and I don't have to imagine it.

JAKK

Why didn't anyone tell me choosing between right and wrong was gonna be so difficult?!

EXT. EMBELEX - IP BASE - REAR ENTRANCE - DAY

Their hands raised, Don, Kia and Komba stand in the middle of a small army of peacekeepers. The captain addresses them.

CAPTAIN

You three should be thankful  
we're under direct orders not  
to harm you in any way. A lot  
of good men and women have died  
because of Activism.

KIA

Well I hope at least a few of  
them were your loved ones!

The captain's face darkens with anger.

YUB YUB (O.S.)

Hello there!

Everyone turns toward the sound. They see Yub Yub,  
Eighty-eight and Lita.

CAPTAIN

(to 88-xor)

You, android. What's that  
thing saying?

YUB YUB

"That thing"?!

88-XOR

He's saying...well, actually,  
he isn't saying anything.

CAPTAIN

I don't understand.

88-XOR

The point was just to get all  
of you facing this direction.

CAPTAIN

To what end?

88-XOR

So you wouldn't see what's  
behind you.

The IP soldiers turn around to find themselves  
confronted by forty Ayeegahs. Except these Ayeegahs  
are seven feet tall and bristling with weaponry.

The Ayeegahs attack and a huge battle begins.

88-XOR

(to Yub Yub)

So those are the adults. Where  
were they earlier?

YUB YUB

Food gathering, is what they  
always tell us when they go  
away. But I'm thinking baby-  
making, too. No privacy in  
those huts, you know.

Komba grabs the two nearest peacekeepers and smashes  
their heads together. Don and Kia grab the dead  
soldiers' weapons and fight their way to the rear  
doors, which are closed.

DON

I'll have us inside in a  
minute.

The keypad gets blasted by an errant laser bolt.

DON

Maybe a little longer.

KIA

No, Don, we don't have time!  
(into wrist  
communicator)  
Lita, we need your help!

Lita heads off. Eighty-eight hurries after her.

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO

The Usurpers battle the Liberators. Meanwhile, the rest of the IP fleet stays out of the fray.

A Usurper takes bracketing fire from a Liberator. Before the IP ship can score a direct hit, it gets obliterated by the Aeon Terodakta.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

GAIGAN

(to Framb)

As long as the big ships don't get involved, we should be able to hold out for a while.

Framb asks a question.

GAIGAN

Who cares WHY they're hanging back? Not everything's a part of a conspiracy, you know. Can't you just savor the moment? We're kicking ass!

Framb isn't buying it.

EXT. SPACE - IP FLEET

The flagship is Dad Father's space defender, the Manifest Destiny.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

A frustrated ADMIRAL observes the progress of the battle. The COMMANDER next to her notices.

COMMANDER

What if we just blew up one Activist ship, Ma'am? You know, one of the small ones? Nobody'd even notice.

ADMIRAL

Orders are to keep out of it.



COMMANDER

We could claim it was a malfunction. That's how my ex-wife died! The gun just...went off. My finger was hardly even touching the trigger. Serious design flaw, if you ask me. I should sue the company.

ADMIRAL

The Chairman directed us to contain the Activists but not engage them. He said we'll understand why soon enough. So let's not have any more talk of violating orders, Commander

COMMANDER

Clear, Ma'am.

ADMIRAL

Good. And after this is all over, Commander...I'd like to introduce you to my ex-husband.

COMMANDER

Sure. Should I bring the g--

ADMIRAL

No need to spell it out, Commander.

INT. MODESTO - POWER CENTER

Jakk, Father and the Chairman watch the battle.

CHAIRMAN

I anticipated you'd be a tough sell, Jakk. That's why I planned something special.

He gets up from the desk and paces.

CHAIRMAN

There was no way to get MODESTO ready in time using government contractors. Humans are always needing to eat and sleep and use the bathroom. Plus they want to be paid for overtime. Frankly, it's a miracle the IP has ever turned a profit.

Jakk eyes the sword.

CHAIRMAN

Due to the pernicious influence of public sector unions, I couldn't just hire robots to build MODESTO. The project would have been tied up in litigation for decades. But then I remembered: those rules only apply to government-funded construction. That's why I privatized MODESTO. Although I really need to start calling it by its new name.

The Chairman activates the com terminal.

CHAIRMAN

Admiral Tepitt, it's time to reveal our new logo.

EXT. SPACE

MODESTO lights up. A gigantic LED logo appears -- a high-tech, stylized "M." Beneath this are the words:

**MODESTO** *presented by* ROBODOX

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

GAIGAN

(infuriated)

ROBODOX??!! Damn you Taara!

INT. MODESTO - POWER CENTER

An entire wall is now comprised of the garish new logo.

CHAIRMAN

With Taara Shahar's repurposed medical androids doing the work, we were able to get MODESTO ready in very little time. All it cost us was the naming rights and a ten percent stake in the new entity.

FATHER

And you own the other ninety percent?

CHAIRMAN

A holding company controls the shares. But yes, that's the gist of it.

FATHER

I would have liked to get in on that deal, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN

I'm sure that's true. But you seemed...preoccupied. And my plans couldn't wait.

(into com  
terminal)

Now, Admiral.

INT. MODESTO - COMMAND CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Admiral Tepitt receives the Chairman's directive.

TEPITT

Yes, Mr. Chairman. Commencing Operation Infinite Liberty!

INT. POWER CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The Chairman grimaces.

CHAIRMAN  
Not what we're calling it.

INT. COMMAND CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Having been humiliated in front of many subordinates, Tepitt struggles to maintain his composure.

TEPITT  
Right.

He presses a button.

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO

The EM field begins to expand, radiating outward from MODESTO. Several Activist fighters get caught in the field and are destroyed.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

GAIGAN  
(into com  
terminal)  
The EM field is expanding! All  
ships take evasive action!

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO

The Activist attack force, as well as the support ships, are now getting caught between the expanding EM field and the IP fleet.

INT. MODESTO - POWER CENTER

CHAIRMAN  
Our new approach to security.  
I call it "embrace and extend."

INT. OCCUPY - BRIDGE

JEF  
We have to call off the attack!

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

GAIGAN

(into com  
terminal)

We'll never get another shot as good as this one, Admiral. If we retreat now, Activism won't survive. I know Don and Kia will knock out the generator. Please give them more time!

JEF (O.S.)

You make a good point, Captain. Such leadership! No wonder you're also a captain of industry!

Gaigan switches off his com terminal.

GAIGAN

I can't believe Taara made a secret deal with the IP before I could make one myself! I'm gonna blow up MODESTO if it's the last thing I do, Framb.

Not what Framb wanted to hear.

INT. MODESTO - POWER CENTER

Jakk watches with concern as Activist ships are swallowed by the expanding EM field.

CHAIRMAN

Soon MODESTO will be able to generate its own EM field. Then we'll sell our defense services to the highest bidders. We can buy out Robodox anytime within the next 30 days. Which means ten percent of the company will be available for purchase by my right-hand man.

Father and Jakk flex their mechanical hands. Then they see the Chairman grinning.

CHAIRMAN

You two have even more in  
common than you realized.

EXT. EMBELEX - IP BASE - REAR ENTRANCE - DAY

Kia and Don battle the peacekeepers while Lita interfaces with the base's security system. Eighty-eight is almost hit by an errant laser bolt.

88-XOR

Enough with the foreplay, Lita!

Lita attempts to connect to the system. Almost immediately she receives a shock that knocks her on her back. She lies there, sputtering and smoking. Kia and Don look to Eighty-eight.

88-XOR

Apparently the base's security  
system isn't looking for love.

KIA

Now what?

DON

Let me try. I've had dealings  
with difficult females.

Kia opens her mouth to protest, but catches herself.

KIA

Fair enough, flyboy.

She covers Don while he goes to work.

The battle continues.

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO

As the EM field expands, the battle continues to go poorly for the Activists.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

Gaigan and Framb work the controls.

GAIGAN

I'm beginning to think you're  
right, Framb -- the field's not  
coming down.

The frown on Framb's face turns slightly upward.

GAIGAN

So we might as well go out in a  
blaze of glory.

Framb's happy moment ends with that.

GAIGAN

(into com  
terminal)

Admiral, I think we should  
attack those space defenders  
head-on. It'll force the enemy  
fighters to back off.

INT. OCCUPY - BRIDGE

JEF

I don't know, it sounds a bit--

SUREVA

Yes! We'll do it for the many  
Bonafos who died to bring us  
the information! Even if it  
was bad information! PREPARE  
FOR BATTLE!

JEF

--like a direct order. Awww.

INT. MODESTO - POWER CENTER

CHAIRMAN

I can tell that power means more to you than money ever will, Jakk. And why wouldn't it? You grew up powerless. People who grow up powerless tend to seek out power.

JAKK

My god...the insight. How do you know these things?

FATHER

You've only scratched the surface of the Chairman's wisdom. Wait'll you hear what he says about watched pots.

CHAIRMAN

My point is that power encompasses so much more than the parlor tricks Hiro Watanabi showed you. Anyone can choke a man to death without lifting a finger. But how many of us can steer the mighty ship that is a multiplanetary corporation? Or maintain a delicate and peaceful balance among seven thousand species, thirty-one thousand political parties, millions of local governments? I've done it for some nineteen years now. Your father will do it after I'm gone. Will you become the third name on this most exclusive of lists?

JAKK

No! I mean maybe! I don't know!



The Chairman strolls toward a giant energy shaft projecting from the floor of the room. A simple guardrail surrounds the waist-high, rectangular opening, and a glass barrier keeps the energy inside the shaft. Blue lightning crackles beneath the glass.

CHAIRMAN

But wait -- there's more. So often the power I wield is intangible, and sometimes I just want to feel it. That's why I had this shaft installed. Place your hand on the glass and you can sense power in its most visceral form. Pure energy at your fingertips. Harness it and you can do...anything.

JAKK

I WANT THE POWER! I WANT IT!

He pulls his sword into his outstretched hand.

CHAIRMAN

But that's wonderful news, Jakk. Just what we were hoping to hear. So why the sword?

JAKK

(action hero  
voice)

'Cause I don't wanna share.

He moves to strike at the Chairman, only to be intercepted by Father, who has drawn his own sword. They duel. The Chairman watches with great interest. And he makes a point to keep one hand on the glass top of the energy shaft.

EXT. EMBELEX - WOODS NEAR IP BASE - DAY

A peacekeeper takes aim at an Ayeegah with his laser rifle. Another Ayeegah knocks him out with a rock to the head, and then smashes his body to a pulp.

Peacekeepers zip through the woods on hoverboards. Ayeegahs pounce on them from high in the trees. They rip the peacekeepers' heads off and drink their blood.

In the middle of pulling the arms off a peacekeeper, Komba looks around and sees carnage everywhere. The Ayeegahs viciously, mercilessly slaughter IP troops, blow up their vehicles, turn their heavy weapons against them. Komba smiles.

KOMBA

My kind of people.

EXT. IP BASE - REAR ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Kia mows down peacekeepers while Don fiddles urgently with security system's wiring.

DON

Almost. Almost.

A laser bolt grazes his head, missing the scalp but ruining his beautiful hair. Kia rushes to his aid.

KIA

Don, are you all right?

88-XOR

(aghast)

Are you kidding? Look at him!

DON

That bad, huh?

Kia struggles with how to respond. A peacekeeper appears with his gun trained on them.

PEACEKEEPER

Weapons down, hands up!

Kia drops her gun and raises her hands.

KIA

(re: Don)

He's wounded.

88-XOR

He's hideous!

PEACEKEEPER

(to Don and Kia)

Don't try to trick me.

DON

Got me in the arm. Not  
bleeding much, but if I could  
just...take my shirt off? For  
a tourniquet?

PEACEKEEPER

Do it fast.

Don slips out of his shirt and hands it to Kia. During  
the exchange he grabs a stealth detonator from her  
belt. She sees this and smiles.

KIA & DON

I love you.

(beat)

I know.

(beat)

You keep copying me!

They giggle like school kids.

PEACEKEEPER

What the hell's going on?

Don tosses the detonator at the peacekeeper.

The peacekeeper bobbles the detonator as Kia and Don  
duck for cover. The peacekeeper gets control of the  
explosive and then he's quietly disintegrated.

DON

Okay. Back to the door.

KOMBA (O.S.)

We got this, Don.

Komba and a handful of Ayeegahs walk up to the door. Behind them, on the battlefield, lie the shattered, splattered remains of the peacekeeper army.

Komba and company use their impressive strength to slowly raise the large door.

DON

Whoa. Did you see that?

KIA

(handing Don a  
dead commander's  
cap)

Yeah, great. Put this on. You  
look awful, man.

INT. MODESTO - POWER CENTER

Jakk and Father duel. The Chairman watches.

Jakk's youth and lust for power give him an advantage. He slams Father against the wall and Father drops his sword. Instead of pressing on, Jakk hesitates.

CHAIRMAN

Very impressive. It's been a  
long time since anyone got the  
best of the President. Are you  
trying to take his job?

Jakk comes to his senses. He backs away from Father.

JAKK

And become a bureaucrat? Are  
you crazy?

FATHER

(getting up,  
retrieving his  
sword)

You've picked up a few tricks  
since last time...Junior.

JAKK

I don't wanna fight you, Dad.  
I don't want your job.

FATHER

(advancing on  
Jakk)

You sure as hell act like it.

Father attacks, forcing Jakk to defend himself. They reach a stalemate.

JAKK

You're having second thoughts  
about your career choices,  
aren't you, Dad? Wishing you  
hadn't sold out.

FATHER

No regrets.

JAKK

You know I'm no threat to you.  
I'm not cut out for public  
service. And that's why you  
won't kill me.

FATHER

(with rising  
anger)

I know that if you die, that  
equity stake is ALL MINE!

Father uses the Power to throw Jakk all the way across the room, into the elevator.

Before Father can reach him, Jakk closes the door of the car. Father swipes at the door with his sword, but the material deflects his blow.

FATHER

Come out, you little shit!  
Come out and TAKE YOUR  
MEDICINE!

CHAIRMAN

For someone who hasn't been a  
parent very long...you're a  
natural.

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO

The Activist armada engages in a full-scale battle with  
the IP fleet. Hundreds of ships exchange fire.

The Aeon Terodakta threads its way through the chaos,  
picking off as many Liberators as it can.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

GAIGAN

What's the holdup down there?

INT. IP BASE - COMMAND CENTER

A COMMANDER and his SUBORDINATE chat, unaware that  
outside the battle is lost.

COMMANDER

Imagine the looks on the  
Activists' faces when our guys  
showed up!

Unknown to the subordinate, Don, Kia, Komba and several  
Ayeegahs enter. The commander's face contorts in fear.

SUBORDINATE

You totally nailed it, sir!

Ayeegahs grab the officers.

INT. COMMAND CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

What's left of the officers lies on the floor.

KIA

Let's knock out that generator!

INT. MODESTO - POWER CENTER/ELEVATOR CAR

The Chairman remains near the energy shaft. Father paces outside the elevator door. Inside, Jakk tries to keep his cool. But his thoughts are racing.

FATHER

Come on out, Jakk. I just want a little father-son chat.

JAKK

No can do, Pops. We gotta bury the-- We gotta stop fighting.

FATHER

Take the job, Jakk. Take it and everybody wins. You, Captain Slovack, the hairy thing, your sister...

Jakk realizes he's given away the secret.

FATHER

Wait -- Kia is your sister? I have a daughter?!

CHAIRMAN

(aside)

Spacebreakers. So much drama.

Jakk's face falls.

FATHER

Well that's...great! I always wanted a little girl! You know what I mean. And Kia used to sit on the Board. She's very familiar with the inner workings of the IP. She loves money, craves power -- it's perfect! SHE won't turn down the Chairman's offer. In a couple of years she and I will be filthy rich and running the whole show!

JAKK

Noooo!

The elevator doors open. Jakk comes out swinging. The President fights back valiantly, but Jakk's fury is a force of nature. Father is steadily driven toward the energy shaft.

Jakk hammers at his father until the President falls. He drops his defenses and Jakk cuts off his sword hand.

Jakk raises his sword for the killing blow. Father feebly tries to shield himself. Jakk hesitates when he notices the Chairman out of the corner of his eye.

CHAIRMAN

You've beaten him fairly. And he was never much of a father to you. So why shouldn't you take all that's his? It's how things have always worked in the IP. Everyone vies with everyone else for power and resources. The competition makes us all stronger, makes the IP collectively greater. Everybody benefits. Except the losers, of course.

Jakk composes himself. He lowers his sword.

JAKK

I was a loser once. Then I became a winner. Blew up the Defense Star, in case you hadn't heard.

The Chairman smirks disdainfully.

JAKK

Became the youngest Star Knight Supreme ever! But you know what? Deep down, I'm still a loser. And I know I'll always be one. Just like my poor, pathetic old Dad here.



FATHER

Thanks.

JAKK

So I won't kill him. You can  
shove your job offer up your  
twat, you ass. Wait a minute.  
Strike that. Reverse it.

Jakk tosses his sword aside.

CHAIRMAN

Well. This is disappointing.

EXT. EMBELEX - IP BASE - REAR ENTRANCE

Kia, Don, Komba and the Ayeegahs run away from the  
base. Seconds later the base blows up.

EXT. IP BASE - TRANSMITTER TOWERS - CONTINUOUS

The towers go up in a ball of flame.

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO

The EM field disappears.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

GAIGAN

(into com  
terminal)

The field is down. Proceed  
immediately with the attack!

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO

The Terodakta peels off from the battle and heads for  
MODESTO, followed by several Usurpers.

INT. MODESTO - POWER CENTER

The Chairman regards Jakk coolly. Father struggles to  
his feet.

CHAIRMAN

You understand of course, Jakk,  
that if you aren't going to  
join the team, I can't let you  
leave here alive. I'd lose all  
credibility as a negotiator.  
Plus I wouldn't want you  
interfering with my efforts to  
recruit your sister.

JAKK

(disdainfully)

Kill me? You and what army?

The Chairman lifts his hand from the glass. The hand  
and what we can see of the Chairman's arm glow blue.

CHAIRMAN

Here's the thing about power:

He casually blasts Jakk with blue lightning. The young  
man convulses with pain.

CHAIRMAN

Use it or lose it.

He zaps Jakk again.

JAKK

Nice line!

And again.

JAKK

Maybe lower your voice, though?

And again.

JAKK

Augh! That shit hurts!

CHAIRMAN

I guess you're not so much like  
your father after all. He had  
the sense to take the deal.

More shock treatment for Jakk, who falls to the floor.

JAKK

Dad! Help me!

Father looks from Jakk to the Chairman and back again.

CHAIRMAN

No one can help you now, Jakk.

Lightning. Jakk screams and writhes.

CHAIRMAN

I take no pleasure from this, you know. It hurts me to see such potential going to waste.

JAKK

Then why not just kill me and be done with it?! Since when does the IP condone torture?

CHAIRMAN

I'm not acting as the head of the IP. I'm acting as the former managing partner of Defense Star Ventures. When you blew up our platform, Jakk, you not only killed many innocent people. You also destroyed a profitable company. And when the ownership group met to plan our next move, I was authorized to find the culprit...and make him suffer.

And suffer Jakk does, as the Chairman blasts him.

JAKK

Dad, I'm begging you!

The Chairman's next burst of lightning is a sustained one. Jakk's agony reaches a new level.

JAKK

I know I'm a megalomaniacal  
asshole! But if you could just  
look past that for a second!

The Chairman stops only to deliver his big line.

CHAIRMAN

And now, Jakk Spacebreaker, you  
will FEEL THE POWER.

Worst. Lightning. Ever.

As Jakk's body contorts, Father looks from Jakk to the  
Chairman to Jakk again. Then he grabs the Chairman's  
hand and turns the lightning on the Chairman...taking a  
pretty good blast himself in the process. As the  
Chairman spasms, Father picks him up and slams him  
through the glass top of the energy shaft. The  
Chairman howls as he falls out of sight. Father  
collapses next to the shaft.

EXT. SPACE - MODESTO

The attack force flies into MODESTO, pursued by  
Liberators.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

GAIGAN

This is where the fun begins.

Framb slaps his forehead.

EXT. INSIDE MODESTO

A high-speed chase takes place within the bowels of  
MODESTO, with numerous ships crashing.

INT. OCCUPY - BRIDGE

JEF

Now I suppose we just wait and  
see what happens, correct?

Sureva shoots him an icy stare.

JEF  
Or try to destroy that big  
honking bastard of a space  
defender, maybe?

Sureva snarls with glee.

EXT. SPACE

The Activists' big ships attack the Manifest Destiny.

INT. MANIFEST DESTINY - BRIDGE

The ADMIRAL and a COMMANDER brace themselves as the ship takes fire. Through the main window the battle outside is visible.

COMPUTER VOICE (O.S.)  
Alert. The bridge deflector  
shield has been compromised.

COMMANDER  
The bridge is vulnerable now,  
sir. Should we evacuate?

ADMIRAL  
Oh, come on, Commander. What  
are the odds that a ship can  
get past all our defenses and  
fly directly through--

An out of control Usurper flies through the window.  
Its fuel and weapons explode, demolishing the bridge.

As the admiral and commander are flung through the air,  
the commander gives the admiral an accusing look.

ADMIRAL  
(shrugs)  
I flunked Statistics.

EXT. SPACE

The Manifest Destiny goes out of control and crashes  
into MODESTO.

EXT. INSIDE MODESTO

A trio of Liberators bearing down on the Terodakta gets smashed by the nose of the Manifest Destiny.

INT. MODESTO - HANGAR

Klaxons blare. IP personnel are in full panic mode.

Unnoticed, Jakk carries Father toward a shuttle. Exhausted, he sets him down near the ramp.

FATHER

Jakk. My helmet.

JAKK

But we gotta get you to a medical facility.

FATHER

Not worth the co-pay, Jakk.

Jakk grasps what this really means. Somberly, he removes the helmet and sees, for the first time, the face of his father. Jakk Sr. smiles weakly at his son.

JAKK SR.

I may be about to die, Jakk,  
but you saved my life.

Jakk is stunned.

JAKK

I can't believe how much better  
your voice sounds now.

Turns out Sr.'s real voice is deeper, more resonant, and way more badass than the one that was filtered through the helmet.

FATHER

Always hated that helmet.

And with that, he closes his eyes.

Jakk regards his dad mournfully.

EXT. INSIDE MODESTO - POWER CORE

The Terodakta flies toward the core.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

GAIGAN

There it is.

Framb points something out to Gaigan.

GAIGAN

What is that?

EXT. POWER CORE

Up on the ceiling is a rectangular opening -- the bottom of the energy shaft that runs up to the Chairman's Power Center. And hanging, precariously, from the opening is the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN

I'll get you, Jakk Senior! You  
and your idiot kid! If it's  
the last--

A laser bolt blows him to smithereens.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

GAIGAN

I'll give my sister your  
regards, Mr. Chairman.

(to Framb)

Now let's close this deal  
FOREVER.

EXT. POWER CORE

The Terodakta's lasers destroy the core, setting off a chain reaction. The ship escapes the way it came in, with a massive energy wave right behind it.

INT. OCCUPY - BRIDGE

Sureva is mesmerized by the sight of MODESTO disintegrating.

SUREVA  
It's beautiful!

JEF  
My god, you're right.  
(beat)  
And like most beautiful things,  
deadly! We have to get away!

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO HANGAR ENTRANCE

Jakk pilots the shuttle away from MODESTO.

EXT. SPACE - NEAR MODESTO

The Terodakta escapes the exploding structure.

INT. AEON TERODAKTA - COCKPIT

GAIGAN  
Waaa-hooo! We did it Framb!

Framb opens his mouth to let out an exultant cry -- only to convulse and die.

GAIGAN  
Probably better off that way.

EXT. SPACE

As Activist ships flee, MODESTO explodes spectacularly.

EXT. EMBELEX - IP BASE - WOODS NEAR REAR ENTRANCE - DAY

In the sky above the woods, a starburst is all that's left of MODESTO. Kia, Don and the androids react.

KIA  
They did it! We won!



Komba and the Ayeegahs couldn't care less about the victory. They're scavenging the IP dead for valuables. But Komba overhears Kia.

KOMBA

Now you got nobody to blame for your problems but your own damn selves. How's that gonna go?

Don looks at Kia gravely.

DON

I hope Jakk wasn't on that thing.

Kia searches her feelings.

KIA

He's okay.

DON

You two have a strong bond.

KIA

Yeah, like twins.

DON

And he probably still has all his hair. What about the chest? He look this good with his shirt off?

KIA

Nobody looks that good. Not even my twin brother.

DON

I'm thinking about trying this new shampoo for-- You have a brother?

Kia smiles at him.

DON

Well who does he think you should be with? Me or Jakk?

She pulls him to her and kisses him lustily.

KIA

That's my Don. More balls than brains.

Don smiles. But then something occurs to him.

DON

You didn't answer the question.

KIA & 88-XOR & KOMBA

Jakk's the brother!

DON

Whose brother?

EXT. EMBELEX - FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

Jakk Sr.'s body, helmetless, lies atop a funeral pyre. Jakk touches a torch to the wood and watches the flames spread. After a moment he walks away, his face grave.

Jakk Sr.'s "corpse" twitches and his eyes open. He sees the fire around him and panics. He tries to get up, but his body is too weak. He sees Jakk and tries to call after him, but smoke fills his lungs. Straining to escape, he is consumed by the flames.

EXT. AYEEGAH SETTLEMENT - COMMONS - LATER

The Ayeegahs have built a large bonfire in their common area. It's fueled by dead peacekeepers.

Kia, Don, Komba and the androids make merry with Yub Yub and the rest of the Ayeegahs.

Gaigan arrives and is happily reunited with his friends. Then Jakk arrives and everybody forgets all about Gaigan.

Jakk, Kia and Don share a group hug. It isn't awkward until Don tries to kiss Jakk.

While Kia and Don have a lovers' spat, Jakk's attention wanders. Looking off into the shadows, he sees three ghosts: Xen Watanabi, Kaja Gugu...and the charred, infuriated Jakk Spacebreaker, Sr.

FADE OUT.



## LAST WORDS

Herbert F. Jordache, Ph.D.

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John Novak's death has been, and most likely will continue to be, a source of much speculation. It garnered significant coverage in *USA Today* and *Rolling Stone*, and on all outlets of the Kyrgyz Republic's National TV and Radio Broadcasting Corporation. (Under the title *Unhappy Man Fails to Steal Rodent*, *The Hot Dog* has sold extremely well in that part of Central Asia.) Rumors are circulating about a major investigative post on Vulture.com. I understand Nancy Grace's people have put out feelers as well.

Revisiting the circumstances of the author's demise might seem pointless and even ghoulish. It's been almost two years, after all, with no new developments in the case. But as John's closest friend, not to mention the most ardent champion of his work; as one of the very few people to have seen the private investigator's report; and as the possessor of a strange and intriguing manuscript, I feel both qualified and compelled to comment.

First of all, and I can't state this strongly enough, Novak didn't kill himself. There is simply no evidence of this whatsoever. Yes, he had a troubled past which included two failed suicide attempts. Yes, like many writers, he struggled with depression and addiction. But unlike others, Novak prevailed in the fight. He licked depression. He pwned addiction. And in the wake of his novel's success, his career -- which, frankly, mattered more to John than anything else, as I'm sure he would admit -- was on an upward trajectory. (Probably not as steep a trajectory as he would have liked, but these things take time, even in the Age of Electrons.)

His personal life was still a bit of a mess, but whose isn't? And the worst of that business was safely behind him. The restraining orders had all been lifted, the warrants all cancelled.

In short, John had a lot to live for -- arguably more than most of us. He would not, could not, did not kill himself.

What happened, then? Was Novak's death a freak accident or was it murder? That's the real question.

Consider the facts:

John was last seen on October 9, 2014, on a trail along the Monongahela River. Morning walks along the Mon had become part of his routine.

Why anyone would want to walk along that sickly, polluted body of water is a legitimate question. In any ranking of Pittsburgh's three rivers, the Mon invariably comes in fourth. But John apparently liked the trail for this very reason -- because he had it all to himself. We all know how prickly writers can get about their need for quiet and solitude.

Novak's walking habit has been confirmed by the testimony of his landlady, Fernanda Mixelzblikt, as well as by a Hazelwood resident who looks and dresses like a man but insists on being called "Amelia." He is apparently an expert on metaphysical agriculture and something called fecal transplants (a topic, I confess, I am reluctant to even Google, let alone research in depth). He lives near the river trail and often saw John walking there.

According to Amelia, on the morning of the ninth Novak arrived at the trail entrance at the same time as always -- "between my second and third purges." Amelia is a devotee of the hallucinogenic ayahuasca, the use of which engenders tranquility and is accompanied by copious vomiting.

So far as the observer could determine, there was nothing out of the ordinary about John's appearance or demeanor that morning. "He had that same funny walk," Amelia told the private investigator. "You know, that schlumpy, roly-poly way of moving, like an aging punk rocker who's all paunchy now and is gonna need a hip replacement in a couple of years."

What was out of the ordinary was the appearance, several minutes later, of a second person, the so-called "mystery man." Amelia was massaging his eyebrows with fermented kale juice (another morning ritual) when he spotted the mystery man entering the trail. "He was tall, but also kind of short," Amelia testified. "And very focused. Like a beam of light from a prism. Or maybe something angrier. When he glanced my way, I could feel my ancestors dousing themselves with holy water, you know, to ward off evil. But I don't wanna pigeon-hole the guy. Maybe his old man never gave a damn about him. It's easy to confuse an adult victim of childhood neglect with someone who is literally Hitler. Adolf Hitler, not the other one."

Because of the way seeing the mystery man had affected him, Amelia kept an eye on the trail entrance for the next half an hour. He had a vague sense that Novak (whom of course he didn't know by name) might be in danger. But Amelia didn't call the police due to his own complicated history with them, which spans several decades and numerous arrests and lawsuits.

When the mystery man reappeared, exiting the trail, he was carrying a small bundle Amelia had not noticed earlier. "Up tight against his thorax, like you'd carry a comatose iguana," the observer said. This bundle could have been any number of things, but of course the main line of speculation has been that it was personal items belonging to John Novak.

The mystery man and Amelia made eye contact again as the man headed up the access road. "He wasn't so evil-seeming that time, but I definitely felt judged," Amelia told the private investigator. "I haven't been the same ever since." The witness was so affected by the encounter that he failed to notice where the mystery man went next, or even whether he continued walking or got into a vehicle. As a result, one of the key pieces to this puzzle has been missing almost from the very start.

Novak's landlady, Mrs. Mixelzblikt, heard him leave her house (where he rented an attic apartment) on the morning of October 9 but didn't catch sight of him. If there was anything notable about his appearance or mood, she couldn't have detected it. "I don't know that it would have mattered," she said. "He was always pretty gloomy, so the only thing that could have gotten my attention is if he'd been upbeat."

(Although this seems to contradict my earlier assertion that John was in generally good spirits in the months before his death, I believe I can explain. Going back at least as far as our undergraduate days, Novak had always cultivated a surly public persona. He walked around with a scowl on his face; he responded to pleasantries with various grunts and snarls. It didn't carry any weight. It was just one of those things writers do to keep the real world at arm's length. Other examples abound. James Joyce wore an eye patch so that people would mistake him for a pirate. Jane Austen smeared her clothing with rabbit entrails.)

The landlady did not see or hear John return on the ninth, but she thought little of it. "He was always keeping odd hours, especially toward the end," she reported. "His movements were always kind of sneaky, like he didn't want you to know his comings and goings. If I hadn't known he was a writer I might have thought he was a criminal."

However, when there was no sign of or word from Novak again on October 10, Mrs. Mixelzblikt began to wonder if something were wrong.

By the terms of Novak's lease the tenth was the last day he could pay his rent without having to tack on a \$50 late fee. According to the landlady, John was routinely late with the rent but "moved mountains" to ensure he always paid by the tenth of the month.

Still, Mrs. Mixelzblikt's concerns were minor at that point. She was aware, from conversations with John, that The Hot Dog was selling respectably and that the author's first royalty payment would arrive soon; she presumed that on the strength of this expected income, John felt no urgency to avoid the late fee. "I even thought he might be planning some kind of big gesture," Mrs. Mixelzblikt said. "You know, like paying me six months in advance, instead of going down to the wire month in and month out. It would have been a nice change, let me tell you."

The landlady did not begin to seriously worry about Novak until the evening of October 11. After watching the 10 p.m. news, she realized she hadn't seen or heard from John for almost two days, which was highly unusual. She considered calling the police at that point, but decided to wait until the morning. "I didn't want to bother them so late," she explained.

Mrs. Mixelzblikt reported John's disappearance on the afternoon of October 12. ("I had to go to the store in the morning, and then I had to get my hair done," she said. "I'd already rescheduled my hair once and Dottie gets mad if you reschedule twice.") In the course of speaking to the responding officer, the landlady mentioned Novak's habit of walking the river trail in Hazelwood.

It was while following up on this lead that the officer found John's wallet, keys and some of his clothing partially concealed by shrubbery near the river's edge. The wallet contained an old, invalid driver's license, no cash and no credit cards or bank cards.

At that point the most plausible explanation of events seemed to be that John had gone for a swim in the river and drowned. But when the responding officer later canvassed the nearby apartment building and obtained Amelia's account of what he'd seen on October 9, the area near where John's possessions were found was searched again. This effort turned up perhaps the most significant clue: a prepaid cell phone of the type often used by criminals and commonly known as a "burner."

The phone did not belong to John. That much is certain. As to whether it belonged to the mystery man spotted by Amelia; as to whether the mystery man had anything to do with John's disappearance; and as to the mystery man's current whereabouts, answers remain maddeningly elusive.



We know that the phone was purchased on October 8 at a convenience store Downtown. Security camera footage reveals the purchaser to be a tall, thin male, which is why we can safely rule out John.

The man who bought the phone is of indeterminate age and skin color. The clerk who sold the phone could offer investigators nothing useful.

The video footage was viewed by Amelia, but he refused to comment on whether the man in the video was the mystery man. Pressed for an explanation, Amelia said that "no matter what they tell you, information ain't free. And it ain't cheap, neither." When asked how much he wanted to be paid, Amelia replied "One trillion dollars." After it was suggested to him that his demand was unreasonable, he lowered it to \$998 billion. As of this writing, negotiations continue.

However, even a positive identification of the mystery man as the purchaser of the cell phone can only help us so much. The burner was bought with cash, and no calls were made from it. Whoever the phone's owner is, and however he might be connected to John, there is no hope of finding him unless he comes forward.

With no evidence of a crime at the scene, and with no record of activity on any of John's bank and credit card accounts, police involvement in the disappearance quickly petered out. They spent a couple of days dredging the Mon and actually did pull two corpses out of the river, but neither of them was Novak's.

Likewise, public interest in the case soon dissipated. John was not yet famous enough, and his case wasn't sordid or sensational enough, to warrant coverage beyond a single news cycle. The media wrote what they could, and having written, moved on.

Mrs. Mixelzblit waited for a month before cleaning out John's apartment and arranging to have his possessions picked up.

And as for Novak's family: Not even the possibility of his death could motivate John's parents to break their long silence. Meanwhile his ex-wives and children seemed utterly unfazed; I suspect that in their experience, this was not the author's first extended and unexplained absence.

I observed all this with growing alarm. Not only was the missing person my longtime friend -- he was the most important writer to arrive on the American scene in a generation or more. It seemed deplorable to me that so little was being made of potentially so great a loss.

I did what I could to keep the story alive, bending the ears of colleagues, ranting on social media, making numerous TV appearances. I hounded the Pittsburgh Police with phone calls and emails. I alternately cajoled and badgered Novak's publisher into hiring a private investigator.

While all of this made me feel somewhat better, it produced very little progress. More time passed, several months, and I confess that my zeal for uncovering the truth waned. I had my own life, my own responsibilities and problems. This was too big a windmill for one Quixote -- especially so after my own Sancho Panza, my devoted squire and wife, Button, began identifying as a feral cat and abandoned our marriage.

Then came the manuscript.

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It arrived, seemingly, out of nowhere one day. It showed up in my office at Springfield University. It came in a plain manila envelope with no postage or shipping label. On the front of the envelope was scrawled: "Herbert F. Jordache, Ph.D." I did not recognize the handwriting, and subsequent graphological analysis has turned up nothing on that front.

It's notable that the manuscript was addressed to "Herbert F. Jordache, Ph.D." instead of "Dr. Herbert F. Jordache" or "Professor Herbert F. Jordache." Why? Because not many people refer to me as "Herbert F. Jordache, Ph.D.," even though I have made it painstakingly clear, over the years, that that is my strong preference. (I don't like being called "Doctor Jordache" because it makes me sound like a whiskey-swilling, wife-swapping, golf-course-haunting sawbones. And I don't like being called "Professor Jordache" because it fails to distinguish me from the teeming masses of adjuncts currently infesting our college campuses.) In fact, there are only two people who have consistently honored my wishes in this regard. One of them is Button. The other is, or perhaps was, John Novak.

There was no note in the envelope, nothing to suggest the sender's identity or motive. The only contents were several laser-printed pages of text -- an untitled manuscript. This is how it begins:

Nobody will ever mistake me for a writer. Least of all me. I learned to type in my freshman year at P.S. 370, but that was mostly because I had the hots for Miss Jonny Larson, the business teacher. I never got anywhere with her, which was not exactly a surprise, but I'm still glad I took that class. Typing has been a valuable skill for me over the years. Plus there were 15 kids in the class and I was the only one who didn't have to sit down to pee. Those are the kind of odds any adolescent boy dreams about.

I never got anywhere with those girls, either, which also was not exactly a surprise. But I had fun trying. At least I wasn't stuck in Accounting.

So anyway I know how to type, which is more than any of the others can claim, and I can put a halfway decent sentence together when I set my mind to it, and when you put those two things together I guess it makes sense that the others nominated me to write this thing. When I say halfway decent I mean only in terms of getting the point across with a minimum of verbiage. I won't be winning any style contests, you can better believe. And nobody will ever confuse me for a genius.

Now Faulkner, he was a genius. The man had some deep frigging thoughts in that head of his. I could never even read his stuff all the way through, let alone write something of my own on that level. Makes you wonder what the guy might have done if he hadn't been such a booze-hound. Or maybe the booze was the secret to his success?

Anyway, let me not get sidetracked. The other three asked me to write up what happened and that's what I'm gonna do.

Only I'm not actually gonna write it, 'cause these hands of mine have seen better days. They're not up to the task of all that typing. I can barely open a can of tuna fish, for Christ's sake. And you couldn't pay me to do this with pen and paper. Well, you probably could pay me, but it'd take me forever to do it that way and probably nobody'd be able to read the damn-fool thing when I was done. My handwriting was once compared to a seismograph during a 7.5 quake, and it's only gotten worse since then.

So what I'll be doing is speaking into this whatchacall, smart phone, which has some kind of voice recorder app on it, and then letting my grandson, Heath, transcribe the whole thing using an app on his phone or a program on his laptop or whatever the hell it is. (No laughing at your grandpa's technophobia, Heath, you little joker.) After he's done transcribing, Heath prints it all out and voila -- we have the story. What we'll do with it, nobody knows yet. But we all wanna see the whole thing on paper. I'm not sure any of us understands why we want that, but maybe understanding will come in due time.

What I'm gonna talk about is a fella name of Jack Neumann, a writer of our recent acquaintance. He published a book you might've heard of, a novel called *Sloppy Joe*. I tried to read the damn thing and didn't get very far, tell you the truth. Maybe I'm missing something, but from what I could tell Neumann's no Faulkner.

He isn't a famous writer, either, not like what's-his-name, you know, the one with the...I can't remember his name. Not famous like that. But a published writer. How many people can say that?

And apparently his book got some good reviews and sold a few copies and all that. So Neumann's the one who should be telling this story! He could do it a lot better than I can.

Only problem is, it's kind of hard to be the storyteller when the story is about how you died.

Needless to say, I was intrigued. I raced through the remaining 40-odd pages of manuscript. It was an engrossing, entertaining piece of work in its own right, but especially so given that it centered on the mysterious death of an author with the initials "J.N." whose book was a comedic crime story named after a sandwich.

Space limitations prohibit me from excerpting any more of the manuscript. And I must emphasize that there is no way to know who wrote it or why they sent it to me -- although I still hope to find out, which is another reason I won't reprint any more of the text, to discourage the kind of people who try to take credit for unsolved crimes. But consider the following:

The unnamed narrator, who is a masterful comic creation, is one of four elderly, well off, widowed or divorced friends who meet every morning at a coffee shop in Pittsburgh. Through a chain of events, the foursome is introduced to the writer, Jack Neumann. The novelist charms his way into the group.

Even though he's quite a bit younger than his companions, Jack has lived a colorful life and enjoys regaling the group with tales of his misadventures. Many of these appear to involve petty theft and other minor crimes, but Neumann couches every anecdote in humor and self-deprecation. He comes across as more raconteur than reprobate.

He is also, from the beginning, extremely solicitous of the group: fetching their drinks and pastries for them, asking after their health and their families. He runs errands for them and does odd jobs around their homes. All of this, the group is led to understand, comes from a former bad boy's genuine desire to be a better person. Neumann has no family of his own, we are told, and he is still, in one form or another, paying for past mistakes.

Then, almost as abruptly as the writer entered the others' world, he disappears from it. The foursome are subsequently shocked to learn that Neumann has drowned in the Monongahela River, after falling off a boat while intoxicated.

Or has he?

The final pages of the manuscript chronicle the group's growing uncertainty about what really happened. They learn, through ongoing media coverage, that Neumann's body was never recovered; that the boat, *Eddie's Cruiser*, was registered to a Dan Cooper, of whom no trace can be found; and that Neumann's belongings -- other than the wallet that was found on the boat -- have disappeared from his apartment. The story ends with the unsettling revelation that certain highly liquid valuables (cash, gold, etc.) are missing from each of the four friends' homes, and that whoever took them seemed to know exactly where to look.

The parallels are unmistakable, the implications...profound.

More about those implications in a moment. First I must address a few minor and, frankly, small-minded points that have been raised by others.

I summarily reject the notion that this might be merely the work of a prankster. Why would someone go to such trouble? What would he hope to gain? And who on Earth does he think he's pranking, anyway? Novak's dead, so far as anyone knows. Whatever one's feelings may be about the exact nature of any afterlife that may or may not exist, I think it's safe to say that practical jokery doesn't work on the deceased. And if the joke is supposed to be on me, as Novak's literary champion, all I can think to respond is: That's all you got? It's not much of a prank. You would have been better off soaping my windows or TPing the elms in my front yard. (Although for the latter you'd have to get in line, as the neighborhood kids have been doing it regularly since last Halloween, when I gifted trick-or-treaters with Soylent roll-ups.)

Likewise, the idea that the creator of the manuscript is trying to smear Novak seems patently ridiculous. Yes, John had his share of enemies, many of whom no doubt seethed with rage at the prospect of him becoming rich and/or famous on the strength of *The Hot Dog*. And in the perverse logic that applies to such matters, Novak's death would only make things worse -- because, as we all know, even the most heinous public figure (Richard Nixon, Steve Jobs) can be redeemed, in most people's eyes, by the simple act of dying.

But I can't put it any more bluntly than this: I went to college with John Novak. I knew John Novak. John Novak was a friend of mine. Nobody could do a better job of smearing John Novak than he did himself. He'd say the same thing, if he were alive.

Which brings us back to the manuscript. If we stipulate that John really is dead -- as we must, so far as I'm concerned -- and that the delivery of the manuscript to me was neither a prank nor an attempt at posthumous character assassination, then there can only be one explanation. No other theory fits all the facts.

It's quite simple, really, when you think about it. The manuscript is the beginning of what was to be John's next novel. After the triumph of *The Hot Dog*, he could have easily taken the path of least resistance for his follow-up. He could have given us the book we expected of him: another brilliant pastiche of slapstick, satire, seriocomic character study and ravaging critique of post-housing crisis American malaise in its myriad forms. He could have presented us with *Hot Dog* 2.0, a slicker, better integrated, more user-friendly model. We would have loved that. We would have snapped it up.

Instead, Novak went in an entirely new direction. He found another narrative voice and rendered it expertly. He changed his focus, broadened his horizons. New characters, new themes, new techniques. He demolished everything we thought we knew about him as a writer and then refused to piece together the wreckage into an anodyne uniformity consistent with Jungian dynamics. And as a result, he was able to transcend the threat of marginalization by the paradigm of hegemonic monoculture.

In short, in this new novel Novak upends the literary apple cart again. By the time we realize what he's up to, we're buried beneath a mound of apples. Their sticky-sweet juice is clotting our hair and stinging our open sores. But pain is a sign of healing. Don't think John didn't know that. For that matter, don't think you didn't know that John didn't know that. You only had to be reminded -- by the master.

But something happened while John was working on the book. His plot about an author faking his death gave him an idea. This is why the manuscript ends shortly after we start to suspect that Jack Neumann isn't dead -- because John saw a possibility that was more interesting than any fiction. A possibility that was just too good to pass up.

When an author writes about a subject, any subject, he thinks deeply about it for an extended time. He considers it from many angles. It comes to pervade his thoughts, his dreams, his posts on social media. If he's a writer of any merit, his thinking about the subject takes him to places few have gone before.

Novak is a writer of merit, and he was thinking about an author faking his own death. The place to which these thoughts took him was: What if an author were to fake the faking of his own death?

It could be a delightful bit of spoofery, a story John could retail for years to come on talk shows, in interviews. It could be a sort of proto-meta-prank, a trenchant commentary on how we, as readers, presume that everything an author writes is autobiographical, or at least owes to his own experience. Last but not least, it could generate plenty of advance buzz about John's new book.

In my heart of hearts, I believe this is exactly what happened. John stopped working on the new novel so he could devote himself entirely to the hoax (actually a double-hoax, when you think about it). He plotted everything out as carefully as he would have plotted a book. He enlisted the help of the mystery man to assist with logistics and perhaps also to act as a suspect, to help sell the illusion. He enlisted Amelia's help as well. And then John arranged to have the manuscript delivered to me at a later date.

The manuscript was intended to be the first sign that all was not as it seemed. It is chock full of references to famous disappearances and untimely deaths. The narrator mentions "P.S. 370"; can it be just a coincidence that 370 is the number of the Malaysia Air flight that vanished over the Indian Ocean in March of 2014, creating endless speculation about its demise? I think not. And this is only the beginning.

In the manuscript, the teacher's name is Jonny Larson. The nephew's name is Heath and he is described as a "joker." The boat is called *Eddie's Cruiser*, and it is registered to a missing person named Dan Cooper. In our world, Jonathan Larson, creator of the musical smash *Rent*, died in his mid-thirties on the morning of the show's first preview performance. Heath Ledger died at an even younger age, and just a few months before his career-making turn as the Joker appeared on movie screens (in 2008's *The Dark Knight*). The boat named Eddie's Cruiser undeniably evokes the 1983 cult classic *Eddie and the Cruisers*, at the end of which (spoiler alert!) it is revealed that Eddie Wilson, reluctant rock hero of the 60's, faked his own death. And "Dan Cooper" happens to be the actual name given by the hijacker who has been erroneously immortalized as "D.B. Cooper," and who accomplished one of the most famous disappearing acts in American history.

And if all that isn't enough for you, bear in mind that the last person to see John Novak alive, Amelia, shares a name with the world-famous aviator who vanished in 1937 and whose fate remains a topic of discussion to this day.



All of this can't be a product of random chance. It had to have been put there -- for me.

This was all part of the plan, you see. John knew I would pick up on the clues. He knew they would spur me to re-examine the circumstances of his disappearance -- and to tell the world about what I'd discovered. People's interest in the Novak case would be rekindled. Rumors and half-truths would propagate like mosquitoes in a swamp. Camera crews would follow me around, hoping to be there at the moment my friend chose to finally reveal himself. (Who else would he reveal himself to, if not me?)

And one day it would happen -- suddenly, unexpectedly. Dramatically. John would return to the world of the living. The news would cross the globe like a nuclear shockwave. Novak would be a bona fide star. Admired by some, despised by many, but talked about by all. His first book would fly off the shelves, his second would command an enormous advance, and the tell-all memoir sure to follow, laying out every step of the elaborate ruse, would break every sales record in the publishing business. It was a brilliant scheme.

And still, somehow, it went wrong. It had to have gone wrong, because if John were "coming back from the dead," he would have done so by now. The ideal moment for his return has long since passed. Were he to come back now, he would be greeted with jeers or, worse, indifference. The fact that John was way too smart to not know this suggests that he is never coming back.

Because he can't.

Because he really is dead.

In trying to fake the faking of his own death, my friend managed to get himself killed. I can't prove this, but I know it all the same.

How did it happen? Impossible to say without more information. Maybe he fell in the Mon, hit his head on a rock, and drowned. Maybe an argument with the mystery man led to John being murdered. Maybe his death had nothing to do with the hoax; maybe it was just a random accident. There are any number of possibilities. We may never get the full story.

In the end, though, it doesn't really matter. John has already cemented his place in the firmament.

For what he's done, by surrounding his death with so much ambiguity, by making art out of life out of art, is transform the mundane into the divine -- a transubstantiation no less meaningful than the ones performed in religious rites around the world for time immemorial. He has placed us in a perpetual state of uncertainty. We believe he's dead but we'll never really know. As a result, he remains fixed in our minds. We can never bring ourselves to deposit him in the dustbin of history because there will always be that infinitesimal chance he'll come back. But because he isn't with us, we can never take him for granted. He won't grow old. He won't fade into irrelevance. He won't become a celebrity pitchman, appear on reality TV, join the famous-authors-looking-for-quick-cash lecture circuit. He'll never be old or weak or boring. In our minds, his best work will always be ahead of him.

Thus has my friend achieved a special kind of immortality -- one not burdened by the quotidian drudgery of inhabiting the material world. John Novak will live forever in our collective consciousness. He will take up residence in our daydreams. His name will be known to our grandchildren's grandchildren. He'll be a Shakespeare for the second millennium -- and beyond.

This is what I must say to you, because it is true and because there is no other way to put it:

His was a death forged by genius.



## Notes on the Type

The text of the screenplays was set in a typeface called Hollywood Movie, which was designed by a group of males between the ages of 13 and 25. Although the font has been a commercial success, its detractors consider it a bland, unoriginal pastiche of many other typefaces.

All other text was set in Times New Romanov. Its creation occurred over many decades and was marked by intrigue, upheaval, adultery, insanity, torture and death. It became the official font of Russia in 1613 and remained so for the next 300 years. It was supplanted by Bolshevik, and later Oligarch. Both of which look a lot like their predecessor.



## In Memoriam

All smart-assery aside, this book is dedicated to the memory of Peter Oresick (1955-2016), a poet, writing teacher, publisher and painter. Generally speaking I don't spark to poetry, but I enjoyed Peter's book *Definitions* very much.

Peter also maintained a blog called 'The Pittsburgh Novel, which, in its own words, is "A Reader's Guide to Western Pennsylvania in Fiction & Drama." He was one of the first supporters of *The Hot Dog*, and for that I will always be grateful.